Study on the C-E translation strategies of publicity texts from the perspective of HC and LC cultures

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Abstract: High-context (HC) and low-context (LC) cultures are crucial in cross-cultural communication, and languages in different contexts follow distinct conversational rules, which directly impacts the translation and dissemination of publicity texts. As China has achieved significant milestones in its socialist modernization and continued to enhance its international influence, it has aroused growing attention in the world. Publicity texts, serving as key documents showcasing China's economic, cultural, and social filed, have become a primary way for the international community to learn about China. Therefore, accurate and effective translation of these texts contributes to shaping China's image in the global society and enhancing its international discourse power. From the perspective of HC and LC cultures, this article selects the C-E translation cases of the White Paper --*A Global Community of Shared Future: China's Proposals and Actions* to conduct a detailed analysis of how words and sentences influenced by HC and LC cultural factors are worked, aiming to provide reference and guidance for the translation practice of publicity texts.

Key words: HC and LC cultures; publicity texts; C-E translation strategies

1 Introduction

A publicity text is used to reflect the political, economic, cultural, diplomatic affairs or activities, and related background of our country's era characteristics, which is an official document stating the policy guidelines of the Chinese government and related guiding ideology. The White Paper of *A Global Community of Shared Future: China's Proposals and Actions* is a policy document issued by the Chinese government, which comprehensively introduces the ideological connotation and vivid practice of building a community of shared future, and profoundly explains the historic significance of building the community in promoting unity and cooperation among all nations and creating a better future for mankind. The White Paper is a typical publicity text with standardized wording and strict logic, neat syntax and long sentences, objective narrative and strong political color.

In previous studies, many scholars have studied publicity texts from different perspectives. Most of the related studies start from the perspective of traditional translation theories to explore their English translation strategies. Some studies have also analyzed from other perspectives, for example, Wang Mengyao uses Steiner's four-step theory of hermeneutics to analyze the rhetorical translation examples of *Beijing Weekly* from 2018 to 2021 [6], and Zhao Chunxiao uses the English translation of the *Twentieth National Congress Report* as a corpus to explore the phenomenon of presupposition in the

publicity text, which provides complementary interpretations for the analysis of code-switching of the publicity texts [7]. However, on the whole, few scholars have explored publicity texts from the perspective of different contexts and cultures. In view of the key role of publicity texts in enhancing China's international discourse and image, studying the translation strategies of the English version of White Papers based on different contexts has important reference significance for the translation of publicity texts.

2 High-context and low-context cultures

The concept of contextual culture was first introduced in 1976 by American anthropologist Edward Hall in his book *Beyond Culture* [4]. In this book, Hall distinguished between low-and high-context communication. A high-context message is one in which "most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message". A low-context message, in contrast, is one in which "the mass of information is vested in the explicit code" [2]. In high-context cultures, communication relies on people's understanding of environmental context, interpersonal relationships, and nonverbal behavior. In such cultures, much of the meaning of a message is not expressed directly in speech, but is conveyed through the context, body language, silence, or other nonverbal cues. As a result, understanding the message usually requires a deep learning of the speaker's background, identity, and their relationship with the listener. However, communication in low-context cultures is more direct and explicit. In these cultures, speech is the primary tool for conveying information. People tend to express their thoughts, opinions, and needs explicitly and rely less on nonverbal cues. So even when communicating with strangers, messages are conveyed with clarity and specificity.

Gudykunst ranked twelve countries with different cultures from "low-context" to "high-context" according to their different levels of context dependence, and we can find that Chinese culture is characterized by high-context features, while Western cultures such as the United States are characterized by low-context features [5]. In cross-cultural communication, the differences between HC and LC cultures often lead to communication conflicts and misunderstandings. In order to avoid these problems to the greatest extent possible, language learners and translators should fully understand these two cultural differences and use appropriate strategies in the translation process to ensure that the information in the source language is accurately conveyed.

3 C-E translation strategies of publicity texts from the perspective of HC and LC cultures

Communication between high-context countries and low-context countries often has differences in understanding due to different cultural backgrounds and ways of thinking, and sometimes these differences may even hinder the smooth progress of communication. Translation, as a cross-cultural mode of communication, plays a crucial role in communication between different languages, so its importance should not be ignored. Therefore, translators need to consider the specific needs of the target readers and adopt adaptable translation strategies when carrying out translation work. Especially when translating contents contain rich cultural information, we should make sure that the expression is clear and concise, and avoid the use of ambiguous processing methods.

3.1 Literal translation

Cheng Zhenqiu believes that when translating publicity texts, we must be faithful to the source text and are not allowed to add or subtract content at will [1]. On the basis of following the linguistic environment of the target language, literal translation seeks to maintain the main sentence structure and sentence pattern of the source text while ensuring that the content and style are consistent with the source text. However, literal translation is not a mechanical translation word by word and sentence by sentence. When necessary, it can appropriately adjust the expression of the source text or change the order of the syntactic structure according to the characteristics of the target language, so that the translation can convey

the meaning of the source text completely or basically. In the communication between high-context and low-context cultures, there are significant differences in cultural background knowledge between the two sides, including myths, religions, philosophies, histories, cultures, humanities and social customs, etc. These differences may hinder effective communication between the two sides. However, some words or sentences with distinctive national characteristics should be "directly translated to the greatest extent possible" in order to express the "exotic flavor" of the source text as much as possible. And we should "reproduce the figurative language of the source text" as faithfully as possible [8]. In order to highlight the high-context cultural characteristics of the Chinese language, the method of literal translation should be chosen.

Example 1: qiān lǐ zhī xíng, shǐ yú zú xià。

Translation: A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

The original phrase "qiān lǐ zhī xíng, shǐ yú zú xià" is a typical Chinese idiom derived from *The Classic of the Virtue of the Tao* written by the ancient philosopher Lao Zi. The phrase expresses a profound meaning in a concise and philosophical way: even the longest and most difficult journey begins with the first step. This expression is highly condensed and symbolic, and is a typical example of a high-context culture. In such cultures, messages are often implicit and need to be interpreted by the reader according to the context and cultural background. While translating directly, the translator successes in conveying the core idea of the source text and formatting and structuring it similarly to the source text, maintaining the poetic and philosophical depth of the source text, so that it can resonate equally well in the English-speaking culture, and is easy for English-speaking readers to understand and accept. This kind of translation reflects the respect for the cultural depth of the source text and the understanding of the expression habits of the target culture. Through such translation, the wisdom of the source text can cross cultural and linguistic boundaries and be understood and appreciated by a wider range of readers.

3.2 Amplification

Amplification means "adding to the translated text words that are omitted from the source text or that do not exist in the source text but express their meanings". The Chinese language often uses non-subject sentence structures, which can also be seen in publicity texts. Although in the high-context Chinese environment, expressions are often very clear. However, in low-context English, subject structure is strictly required, and sentences lacking a subject are often difficult to accept. If the translator ignores these implicit factors without explaining them, it is likely to bring comprehension difficulties to low-context readers. Therefore, when translating such non-subject sentences, translators need to use the amplification method. According to the specific context and the speaker's intention, we can carry out the necessary amplification method to add to the target language the information that is not explicit or mentioned in the source text, so as to reveal the implied logical relationship. This practice will help smooth communication between the high-context text and the low-context readers.

Example 2: jiān chí qīn chéng huì róng hé yǔ lín wéi shàn、yǐ lín wéi bàn zhōu biān wài jiāo fang zhēn，shēn huà tóng zhōu biān guó jiā yǒu hǎo hù xìn hé lì yì róng hé，bǐng chí zhēn shí qīn chéng lǐ niàn hé zhèng què yì lì guān，jiā qiáng tóng fā zhǎn zhōng guó jiā tuán jié hé zuò，wéi hù fā zhǎn zhōng guó jiā gong tóng lì yì。

Translation: Adhering to the principles of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit, and inclusiveness, and the policy of forging friendships and partnerships with its neighbors, China strives to increase friendly ties, mutual trust, and converging interests with its neighboring countries. Guided by the principles of sincerity, real results, amity, and good faith and with a commitment to the right approach to friendship and interests, China endeavors to strengthen solidarity and cooperation

with other developing countries and safeguard the common interests of the developing world.

The original sentence is a typical non-subject sentence, which is a rare structure in English. Even though there is no subject, native Chinese speakers can understand the meaning of the sentence by virtue of the meaning and context. If the target language readers are to understand the meaning of the sentence as well, the subject in the original sentence must be completed. English emphasizes the existence of the subject, so when translating this kind of sentence, the translator should first set the subject in the translation by clarifying the sender of the action according to the context. Through the background information of the source text, the translator chooses "China" as the subject, and at the same time divides the structure of the original sentence according to the semantic relationship. Therefore, when translating Chinese non-subject sentences in high contexts, we should divide sentences according to the logical relations, and then use translation techniques, such as converting non-subject sentences into subjective ones or rewriting active sentences into passive ones. In the process of converting to subject sentences, we can consider using "there be" structure when encountering sentences containing "yǒu".

3.3 Annotation

Language is formed in people's social production and living practices, and it reflects objective reality. With the progress of the history of nations and peoples as well as the development of social civilization, various languages have also gradually produced many ethnic and folklore traditional vocabularies with local characteristics. These vocabularies have three characteristics: exclusivity, embedded cultural connotations, and no equivalent vocabulary in English [8], and they are subject to the cultural customs, lifestyles, cultural traditions, history and political events of a particular country or people. The White Paper of *A Global Community of Shared Future: China's Proposals and Actions* contains many Chinese-specific words, such as "wǔ wèi yì tǐ", "sì wèi yì tǐ", "yí dài yí lù" and so on. These words involve all aspects of China's politics, economy, history, society and daily life, and focus on things and phenomena unique to China. When translating these words, idioms, epithets, acronyms, etc. with national characteristics, in addition to directly displaying their Chinese characteristics through literal translation, it is also necessary to add annotations so that readers of the target language can fully understand the cultural connotations embedded in these words.

Example 3: zhōng guó tí chū gòu jiàn rén lèi mìng yùn gòng tóng tǐ "wǔ wèi yì tǐ" zǒng tǐ kuàng jià。

Translation: China has made a five-point proposal in the areas of partnerships, security environment, development, inter-civilization exchanges, and ecosystem to build a global community of shared future.

The expression "wǔ wèi yì tǐ" in Example 3 is a typical Chinese expression that has specific cultural and political connotations in Chinese, reflecting an integrated and pluralistic structure. This expression is common in Chinese and relies on the readers' understanding and background knowledge of this policy terminology. The translator, through the means of annotation, materializes "wǔ wèi yì tǐ" into five specific areas: partnerships, security environment, development, inter-civilization exchanges, and ecosystem, making the originally abstract concept concrete and clear. This translation strategy is in line with the low-context culture of English, which tends to convey information directly and in detail to ensure that readers can understand its meaning even without specific cultural background knowledge. This translation strategy not only ensures the accurate delivery of information, but also enhances the readability and comprehensibility of the text, and is an effective example of dealing with cultural differences between high and low contexts. For global readers, this direct and detailed presentation helps to better understand China's diplomatic and global strategies and reduces the possibility of cultural misunderstanding.

4 Conclusion

Publicity texts can enhance a country's image, strengthen its international discourse power, and promote cross-cultural understanding and cooperation. Such texts play a crucial role in international relations and public diplomacy in the context of globalization. Therefore, doing a good job in translating publicity texts from Chinese to English is one of the important channels to enhance China's international status. Huang Youyi proposes the principle of "three closeness in publicity" to deal with the difficulties in publicity translation (closeness to the actual development of China, closeness to the information needs of foreign audiences about China, and closeness to the thinking habits of foreign audiences) [3]. According to this article, when translating publicity texts, it is necessary to combine the theory of high and low context cultures, fully consider the cultural backgrounds of the source language and target language, as well as the similarities and differences in thinking modes, and choose diverse translation strategies such as amplification, literal translation and annotation to promote effective communication of publicity texts in cross-cultural dissemination.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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