

International Publicity Translation in the Context of Chinese Culture Exporting

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Abstract

Under the background of global integration and cultural power strategy, international publicity translation plays an increasingly indispensable role in making China known to the world and creating favorable global surroundings for the development of Chinese politics, economy and culture. How to carry out code-switching under the premise of ensuring the authenticity of the information conveyed in Chinese and maximize the amount of information without damaging the culture of target language? Currently, cultural vacancy and poor readability are two common serious problems in translation. Hence, we should combine positive culture exporting with corresponding translation adaptation, not only to improve the readability of the version, but also to export brilliant Chinese culture. It is a sacred mission that should be kept in mind to enhance the soft power and international influence of Chinese culture, to implement the culture exporting strategy and build a strong cultural power.

Keywords

International publicity translation; Culture exporting; Cultural vacancy; Translation adaptation.

1. Introduction

Today, culture, politics and economy are intertwined. Comprehensive national power competition not only lies in politics, economy and military, but also in cultural soft power. Building a cultural power is an inevitable requirement for the realization of Chinese Dream. In translation, we should strive to help foreigners better understand China and enhance China's cultural soft power and international image, influence and competitiveness. Under the background of global integration and cultural power strategy, international publicity translation plays an obviously irreplaceable role. How far and how much Chinese culture can be exported depends, to a large extent, on translation. From political level, translation quality affects China's international image; from economic level, it also affects introduction of foreign capital and investments in China; from cultural level, it shoulders responsibility of communication between Chinese culture and world culture. Therefore, how to break down cultural barriers and realize effective and successful translation of publicity materials and construct a new normal of international publicity translation theory is of theoretical and practical significance.

2. What Is International Publicity Translation?

International publicity translation is a general term for the practice of translating publicity-oriented materials. In a broad sense, it covers almost all translation activities. In a narrow sense, it includes practical translation of media reports, government announcements, introductions to enterprises and institutions, public signs and so on. In short, it is a special kind of translation, with Chinese as information source, English as information carrier, media as channel and foreigners as recipients. Because of its clear purpose and political nature, it is an important way

for China to publicize its mainstream ideology and cultural values. In the context of cultural power strategy, translation should be conducted in accordance with the mindsets of foreign readers, therefore appropriate adjustments should be made to the original, and most importantly, we should devote ourselves to telling Chinese stories in translation, helping foreigners better understand China, enhancing China's cultural soft power, comprehensive national power and international competitiveness, building up a good image of China worldwide.

3. Major Problems in International Publicity Translation

3.1. Cultural Vacancy

Cultural vacancy refers to the loss of cultural information due to different ecological, social, religious and other cultural information carried by the language so that corresponding expressions can't find their way in the language exchange process, resulting in the loss of cultural information and a certain degree of cultural loss. Chinese culture is extensive and profound with strong national characteristics. It is inevitable to come into contact with many expressions with strong Chinese cultural characteristics, like idioms, dialects, allegorical sayings, etc. These expressions conveying a certain kind of cultural connotations or associations are not completely equivalent in other languages, and, of course, in the clashes and contradictions of two different cultures, create major obstacles to the translation of cultural vacancy and culture-loaded words. How to make translation both expressive and vivid is a big challenge. So, in the process of translation, linguistic features of the target language should be respected. Instead of simply imposing the form of the original language on the target language, it should be transformed into the mental language of foreigners, otherwise it will be incorrectly disseminated and the resulting consequences will be counterproductive. So, in line with the principle of cultural equality and cultural exchanges, we must take the initiative to actively promote Chinese culture exporting by means of appropriate translation strategies.

3.2. Poor Readability

International publicity translations are intended for foreign readers to draw attention to China. Different from other language systems, Chinese language is concise and comprehensive, and sentences often contain complicated internal logical relations, so when translated into English, it is easy to form a long and tedious way of expression which is not only grammatically incorrect, but also unreadable. So, it should not be taken for granted that foreign readers will understand, appreciate and accept Chinese culture and expressions as Chinese do. Suppose the version is obscure and unintelligible, how can people have the desire to read it? Therefore, how to make the target text conform to the logic and expressions of the target language so as to improve the readability of the target text is a major problem in the translation of publicity materials that can accommodate both Chinese and foreign languages.

4. Strategies and Suggestions on International Publicity Translation

To guarantee Chinese culture exporting, readability and cultural output must be both taken into account. First of all, Chinese culture should be exported rather than moved out by force. It is cultural exchange rather than cultural promotion. As for international publicity translation, Mr. Huang Youyi put forward three principles of "close to", namely: close to the reality of China's development, close to the needs of foreign audiences for Chinese information, close to the mindsets of foreign audiences. Therefore, only by fully respecting and considering the needs and thinking patterns of foreign readers, thoroughly analyzing the differences and characteristics between Chinese and foreign cultures can Chinese culture be successfully exported. Secondly, Chinese culture must not lose its own distinctive features. Looking back on

the Westernization Movement when Western learning was introduced, Feng Guifen, Zhang Zhidong and others put forward the idea of “Chinese learning as the fundamental structure, Western learning for practical application”. Today, more than a century later, for Chinese culture exporting, we should actively carry forward the fine traditional culture of the Chinese nation, vigorously publicize the unique ideology and value system, and leave behind a bright red China in the colorful world culture. Therefore, in international publicity translation, those expressions that can reflect Chinese characteristics, embody Chinese spirit and contain Chinese wisdom should retain the exotic flavors as close to the original as possible, which can not only arouse the interest of foreign readers in Chinese culture, but also conform to the national cultural power development strategy.

4.1. Culture Exporting

In the context of the cultural power strategy, the primary goal of translation is to promote Chinese culture exporting, enhance the soft power of Chinese culture and strengthen the international influence of Chinese culture. Therefore, when dealing with some expressions with distinctive Chinese cultural characteristics, we should properly retain the exotic flavors, and alienation seems to be more conducive to the introduction of Chinese culture. Take the Government Work Report 2021 for example:

Original: “天问一号”、“嫦娥五号”、“奋斗者号”等突破性成果不断涌现。

Version: Last year saw a stream of scientific and technological breakthroughs, like the Tianwen-1 Mars mission, the Chang’e-5 lunar mission, and the Fendouzhe (Striver) deep-sea manned submersible.

Analysis: “Tian Wen-1” is from Qu Yuan’s long poem “Tianwen”, “Chang’e-5” from the Chinese classical myth “the Goddess Chang’s fly to the moon”, “Striver” ranked top ten in the 100000-meter manned submersible name-collecting campaign and was eventually designated by the consultative group composed of experts and scientific research team. It fully reflects the spirit of contemporary scientific and technological researchers to continuously struggle and conquer new heights, and also conforms to the spirit of the times and “the most beautiful striver” image of the Chinese manned deep diving team. These names, quoted from Chinese classics or authoritative works, are deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture and ingeniously integrated into the spirit of the times, reflecting Chinese nation’s spirit of exploration of nature and the universe for thousands of years, showing the unique romance of Chinese culture with a deep Chinese imprint. The Tianwen-1 Mars mission, the Chang’e-5 lunar mission and the Fendouzhe deep-sea manned submersible are transliterated, which not only retain the previous cultural image, arouse the interest of foreign readers, but also highlight Chinese cultural characteristics and strengthen the international influence of Chinese culture.

As a Chinese who knows a lot about traditional Chinese culture, one look at Chang’e, and he will instantly and instinctively know it is associated with the moon. But foreign readers with limited knowledge of Chinese culture may be at a loss to understand the implied connections. Therefore, such a cultural gap, to a large extent, can only be made up through translation. After Tianwen-1, Chang’e-5 and Fendouzhe, the translator adds Mars mission, lunar mission, and deep-sea manned submersible, which not only retain the Chinese elements, but also popularize Chinese cultural background knowledge.

4.2. Translation Adaptation

According to Huang Youyi’s translation principle, international publicity translation should think from the perspective of foreign readers, study and analyze the differences and characteristics between Chinese and foreign cultures, and translate by fully respecting and considering the needs and mindsets of foreign readers. Only in this way can Chinese culture be successfully exported and a real cultural power established. To guarantee the readability of the

version, proper adaptation is essential to render it in accordance with the thinking habits of foreign readers. Take the Government Work Report 2021 for example:

Original: 优化和稳定产业链供应链。继续完成“三去一降一补”重要任务。Version: We will ensure the stable operation of industrial and supply chains and improve them. We will continue working on the five priority tasks of cutting overcapacity, reducing excess housing inventory, deleveraging, lowering costs, and strengthening areas of weakness.

Analysis: Firstly, Chinese give priority to parataxis and English hypotaxis, so the version of the two clauses adds “we will” to ensure sentence integrity. Secondly, the version skillfully adopts different methods in dealing with the two coordinate verbs “优化” and “稳定”. “To stabilize the industrial chain and supply chain” actually means stabilizing the operation of the industrial chain and supply chain, so it is translated as “ensure the stable operation of industrial and supply chains” to ensure sentence logicity and conform to logical thinking of foreign readers. And “优化” is literally translated as “improve them”, successfully avoiding the repetition of pronouns, thus in conformity to English style. Moreover, the translation of “三去一降一补” is very appropriate as well. In Chinese, the structure of “number+noun” is often used to deepen impression, facilitate memory and recitation, such as “两个务必”、“三严三实”、“八荣八耻”. Foreign readers may have trouble understanding these exactly, so, to get close to their logical habits, first we just translate it directly into “five priority tasks”, and then explain the five tasks in turn. In this way, the structures of hierarchies and priorities are self-evident. Finally, “三去一降一补”, namely “去产能、去库存、去杠杆、降成本、补短板” was put forward by President Xi Jinping in the light of supply structural reform. The concept of “三去一降一补” may sound quite familiar to Chinese, but foreign readers do not know much about it due to cultural differences. So, from the viewpoint of foreign audience, these five points are translated into: cutting overcapacity, reducing excess housing inventory, deleveraging, lowering costs, and strengthening areas of weakness, with corresponding verbs adopted to avoid repetition. The version is faithful, smooth and clear in hierarchy. It not only expounds to foreign readers the supply structural reform of China from unique perspectives, but also conveys Chinese political characteristics to ensure culture exporting.

5. Conclusion

It is concluded that active culture exporting and flexible translation are mutually integrated in international publicity translation, both of which are indispensable and complementary. In order to make foreign readers understand Chinese culture more easily and fully, it is more beneficial to export Chinese culture and realize the primary goal of international publicity translation, which is also essential to building a cultural power. In the context of global integration and the strategy of cultural power, international publicity translation should keep its original intention and mission firmly in mind, ensuring the positive impact of the version on the audience, protecting the national language culture and respecting the target language culture and the audience's acceptance psychology. Translators should not be merely contented with simple correspondence, but with the transmission of its reality and the expected function to the audience. On the premise of protecting the culture and national interests, translation should seek common ground while reserving differences, establish a good national image and enhance the soft power of Chinese culture. To explain the reality of China's politics, economy, language and culture with the form of language understood and accepted by the West without language barrier, which is the most direct and effective communication between China and the West.

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