

# On Translation of Business Terms in Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong-Taiwan

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Although Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan are the same language, there are still diverse expressions and translations of terms. This paper is designed to take some business English terms as examples to study the differences in the performance and coordination of translation of terms in Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong-Taiwan to avoid the misunderstanding and inefficiency of business exchanges across the Straits. By illustrating the consistence in translating English business terms across the Straits, this paper offers an analysis of the essential concepts of terms and ways of translation and the characteristics and causes of differences in business communication between China's Mainland and Hong Kong-Taiwan to emphasize the promotion of language and culture reunification in the process of the unification and prosperity of the whole country of China.

*Keywords:* translation, term, localization

## Introduction

Due to the historical, political, and geographical reasons, and many other factors, Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan are quite different in the use of terms. In many cases, experts and scholars on both sides, although using the identical language of Chinese, have to use the terms of English, the source language, to confirm the expression. Such situation of “one thing with more than one meaning” is seriously affected with each other in trade areas and cultural activities.

During the past two decades, a lot of business books were translated into Chinese, and lots of famous business scholars were introduced to Chinese readers. Some translated business books also have been the textbooks of universities for many years. It goes without saying that many translation works in business are pretty decent; however, on the other hand, some of them are not so competent. This, to some extent, blocks the development of the Chinese economy and communication in Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong-Taiwan, as well as international communication between Chinese researchers and their foreign counterparts.

From this point, business terms are chosen to be the case studies of this paper to illustrate the unique performance in translation of terms between Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong-Taiwan.

## Ways of Translation of Terms

The most common ways of translation of a foreign language to a target language are based on: literal

translation, free translation, and fractal translation (Lauriston, 1994).

Literal translation is a notion which has, for many centuries, been at the center of most translation controversies, where it has been either staunchly defended against or vigorously attacked in favor of its rival, free translation (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2004, p. 62). However, there is a certain amount of variation in the way the term is applied, as literal translation is sometimes understood as including the related notion of word for word translation. So a literal translation can be defined in linguistic terms as a translation “made on a level lower than is enough to convey the content unchanged while observing target language norms” (Barkhudarov, 1985, p. 2).

Free translation is a type of translation in which more attention is paid to produce a natural reading target text than to preserve the source text wording intact; also known as sense-for-sense translation, it contrasts with literal and word for word translation. Linguistically, it can be defined as a translation “made on a level higher than is necessary to convey the content unchanged while observing target language norms” (Newmark, 2005, p. 95).

Translation of terms has no exception. Specifically speaking, literal translation is used by their language in the same or similar voice to translate the source written terms. Such as, people say “伊妹儿” in Chinese instead of the English “E-mail”; the term “brain trust” is translated into “智囊团” in Chinese.

For fractal translation, it has the shaped type of source language terms copied into the native language writing, such as UFO, e-book. Such methods of translation are increasingly used in our life because of its convenience and cultural interaction.

### **Different Translation of Business Terms Across the Straits**

As the continuous advancement in the business field, more and more exchange and cooperation happen in Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong-Taiwan, so many terms are imported through the form of English-Chinese translation but with different versions in Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong-Taiwan.

#### **Difference in Abbreviation**

Hong Kong and Taiwan have the orientation of abbreviated translation in various terms, but not appropriate or inaccurate abbreviation, often leading to ambiguity or understanding difficulties.

For example, in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region website, it released out of the saying “人流的问题”, very frightening at first glance. Does the Hong Kong Government also consider the planning on abortion? Actually, “人流” is from the abbreviated translation of “the flow of human resources”.

In Hong Kong and Taiwan, such examples are extremely common, such as “inflation”, it means “通货膨胀” in the Mainland, but it is very strange to be read as “通膨” just like Taiwanese does.

#### **Difference in Expression**

The Mainland and Hong Kong, Taiwan have many different expressions in business terms, such as “M & A”, more than the Mainland take it as “并购”, Hong Kong and Taiwan take it as “购并”.

What is more, you may find more versions in translating a multinational company like “跨国公司”, “多国公司”, “多国企业”, “多国籍企业”, “全球企业”, “国际公司”, etc.. In spite of the fact that many experts who bring up “多国公司” may refer to double or more nationalities of a company, it is better to use “跨国公司” to replace it.

### **Difference in Culture Background**

The difference in business translation is also included in the treatment of cultural background. For instance, the Mainland may generally translate it into “第三方物流”, but it is often translated into “第三者物流” in Hong Kong. Seemingly, there is no difference in nature between “第三方” and “第三者”, but the problem is that “第三者” in the Mainland has been devoted to be used to refer to the feelings of others to establish improper relations between men and women. So, if regardless of its social and cultural attribution, much amiss will be applied into business term since it ignores the functional equivalence but stays in the form of translation.

### **Solutions of the Difference**

Since the difference in business term translation in Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong-Taiwan will lead to unsmooth exchanges, the standardization of business translation becomes much in need.

On the principles or standards of translation, Eugene Nida (1993) proposed the principle of “Functional Equivalence” or “Dynamic Equivalence”. In recent years, various scholars have proposed the similar guiding principles in the field of business management. However, only the pursuit of a trustworthy translation of terms may not be accurate, and it is not a good idea to foster and strengthen the exchange. In fact, the principles of “Faithfulness, Expressiveness and Elegance” guided by YAN Fu, still have a strong functional significance in new situations, especially in business management.

The first, in the translation of business terms, “Faithfulness” is still the main request, and in particular to be accurate, it cannot be abbreviated (Munday, 2001).

For example, gross profit margin (GPM), should be fully translated as “毛利润率”. While Taiwan sometimes briefly translated it as “毛利率”. As it is well known that “利率” refers to the amount of interest with the ratio of the total amount of loan capital at a certain period of time, which is a totally different concept from “利润率”. Such translation runs counter to the “faithful” principle, because it very easily leads to confusion and communication barriers.

The “Faithful” principle is also included in full understanding of the source term and the accuracy of Chinese words (HUANG, 2006). Such as the phrase of “non-profit organization” has three types of translation, “非营利机构”, “非盈利机构” and “非赢利机构”. According to the definition of Wikipedia, a “non-profit organization”, (correspondingly “not-for-profit”) is a legally constituted organization whose objective is to support or undertake activities of public or private interest without any commercial or monetary profit. From the above, it can be concluded that its core meaning is “not for commercial interests” and therefore, “非营利机构” is the best translation.

The second, on the dependable and accurate basis, it should also be clear and fluent as far as possible.

For instance, “shipper”, a term from global trade, the Mainland has translated it into “发货人”, or “托运人” and so on, and it is translated into “付货人” in Hong Kong and Taiwan. With the modern Chinese expression, “付” is the “钱, 款”, but not with “货”, thus leading to the hysteric of concept. What is more, in contrast with “托运人”, regardless of the fact that it is desirable to express the meaning of the shipper, “发货人” is more direct, clear, and easy to understand.

Another example is about “forwarder”, which also has many different translation like “转运人”, “货运代理”, “货运代理人”, “运输代理人”, “货物运输行”, “承揽运送人”, “运输承揽人”, “货运承揽人”, etc.. By

comparison, “转运人”, although the most faithful to the source of the word, is not clear enough to be understood. And “货运代理” is clear, fluent, and easy for communicating, so it is worth promoting. Most of the Mainland people are now using that translation, sometimes referred to as “货代”.

The third, since business term translation is different from the ordinary translation, it still has certain requirements of Elegance, and is more conducive to the promotion and progress of the concept, since it means stable, concise, and practical, in particular be consistent with the target cultural context in connotation (Gentzler, 2007).

Taking “financial repression” for instance, it has two kinds of translation: “金融压抑” and “金融抑制”. It refers to the government on the financial activities and the excessive intervention suppressed the development of the monetary system, but lags behind the development of the monetary system or business development, resulting in a vicious circle of financial repression and business backwardness. If you look into the dictionary, “repression” is indeed interpreted as the word “压抑”, but in modern Chinese, the word is commonly used in context with the psychological, and readers may find difficult to link it with the content of macro-business management. Therefore, “抑制” is more in line with the business context, to be more convenient and concise.

### Conclusion

With the above exploration, Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan have a huge gap in the expression and translation of business terms, which is not conducive to communication and cooperation in Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong-Taiwan. In some cases, it may be traced to the failure of trade negotiations, resulting in business losses and hindering economic development.

But with the further and deep integration in business practice, such difference will be progressively reduced. Therefore, Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan should start from the source of the translation in terminology, to standardize, and unify the statement of terminology and its translation. Only through the promotion of the unity of terminology, will it be one of the effective ways to encourage the peaceful reunification of the motherland.

But it is difficult to do so, it needs time to test and integrate the difference. It additionally needs to strengthen mutual exchanges, and enhance mutual understanding of the Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong-Taiwan.

People in Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong-Taiwan are all the same Chinese with the same origin. The same Chinese culture can remove any microscopic differences. It is believed that in the near future, not only terms of business translation will achieve unification, but also more further terms of translation will be consistent, which will give a great rejuvenation to make an important contribution to the whole Chinese nation.

We look forward to the more and more uniformed translation of terms, and gradually reaching the realm of Faithfulness, Expressiveness, and Elegance in Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong-Taiwan.

On the other hand, the translation of terms has a special significance for the reunification of the motherland. Each term is to be submitted and defined within the context in which it first occurred (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990, p. 11). To obtain a unified terminology to understand each other easily, it is necessary to complete the localization and regulation of terms in reciprocal interaction. This paper just offered an overview of the translation of business terms in the ways described above, which has tended to draw mainly from the rich sources in terminology, regardless of how well established they are deemed to be.

In addition, this paper only discussed some business terms in translation of terminology in Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong-Taiwan, from which it has found something new. Nevertheless, for the future study, more aspects of this field should be considered.

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