Chinese-to-English Translation of Publicity on Chinese Minority Culture: Discourse Ideology and Translation Strategies*

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Discourse ideology refers to the position, attitude and guideline employed by a writer or speaker constructing a discourse in relation to the readers/hearers. This paper defines the notion of discourse ideology in the practice of translation, highlights the relationship between discourse ideology and the translator’s subjectivity, and illustrates the translation strategies appropriate to the context of publicity of Chinese minority culture to the readers outside China. A tentative conclusion is drawn that the top-down approach from discourse ideology to translation strategies and the bottom-up approach from translation strategies to discourse ideology complement with each other in the Chinese-to-English translation of publicity on Chinese minority culture.

Keywords: discourse, ideology, Chinese minority culture, translation strategy

Foreword

Discourse ideology as an important notion in linguistics is frequently mentioned in critical discourse analysis (CDA), focusing on the relationship between language and power. Ledin and Machin (2016) study the performance management reports of Swedish universities, indicating that “quality” and “excellence” are key terms of “intangible assets” for higher education in discourse ideology concerned and the linguistic manipulation is relatively stable: administrative wording, promotional style and one-size-for-all rhetorical structure (pp. 445-467). R. Scollon and S. W. Scollon (1995) hold that power and solidarity are two important discourse ideologies, yet arguing that discourse ideology should be regarded as part of the Politeness System in terms of pragmatics (pp. 44-49). Furthermore, the two scholars divide discourse ideology into three types, namely deference, solidarity and hierarchy. Martin (1992) clearly mentions the notion of discourse ideology in the discourse analysis of systemic functional grammar (pp. 513, 582). According to Martin, discourse ideology plays a crucial role in discourse or text in relation to discursive power distribution and re-distribution. Based on the significance of discourse ideology, this paper will further explore the components of discourse ideology by a combination of literature review and relevant research achievement analysis as well as an illustration of the

* Acknowledgements: This paper is funded by Guizhou Province’s 2014 Teaching Reform Project—E-C and C-E Translation Teaching Models and Practices Based on Guizhou’s Local Culture; and it is also funded by Guizhou Province’s 2014 Comprehensive Academic Disciplinary Reform for the English Major.

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relationship between discourse ideology and the translator’s subjectivity, and accordingly the translation strategies appropriate to the context of publicity of Chinese minority culture to the readers outside China. The method of research adopted is qualitative rather than quantitative.

**Discourse Ideology and Strategies in Translation**

Translation is a cross-cultural communication. In translation practice, discourse ideology may be viewed at both macro- and micro-levels. According to Munday (2008) this type of ideology is related to politics, “voices”, and style (pp. 3-9). Through back translation, he explores the technique of back translation and stylistic features (wording and structure) in translating Spanish texts into English texts, arguing that translation is an interlingual activity as well as an intralingual and intersemiotic adaptation. Seen in this way, translation covers macro-level decision making (ideology) and micro-level wording and structuring (techniques). Munday (2008) takes narration for example, illustrating that in translation the mechanism of ideology may be different in source text (ST) from that in target text (TT) in terms of authorship, text constructors and recipients, and readership (p. 12), as Table 1 shows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Starting level</th>
<th>Medium level</th>
<th>Ending level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source text (ST)</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Implied author, narrator, narratee</td>
<td>Implied reader, ST reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target text (TT)</td>
<td>ST reader, real translator</td>
<td>Implied translator, TT narrator, TT narratee</td>
<td>TT implied reader, TT reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>Authorship</td>
<td>Text constructors and recipients</td>
<td>Readership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Munday (2008), Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar is a suitable instrument in translation, by which context of culture and context of situation/register serve ideology at the macro-level whereas lexicogrammar contributes to the realization and instantiation of ideology at the micro-level (p. 47).

Chinese and foreign experts have been advocating the publicity of ethnic culture to the outside communities through translation in terms of discourse ideology as well as strategies and techniques. LIAO (2006) notes that translation is a bridge for gap in cultural knowledge between source text and target text readers (p. 145). Normally, there is an expectation that the intention of the translator should be the same as that of the original author. Nevertheless, things can be different in some cases, the reason being whether the text to be translated is taken as document or text. Sager (1997) assumes that “text” is a combination of content and form as well as the original author’s purpose while “document” embodies the translator’s intention (p. 34). The translator, thus, is obliged to take one of the two positions. For the former, the translation principle of formal faithfulness is obeyed, emphasizing primary readers (source text readers); for the latter that of dynamic adaptation or “betrayal” is adopted, highlighting secondary readers (target text readers). Here, the intention of the translator has a strong impact on the translation strategies and techniques. Nord (1997) proposes two concepts of translation: realistic translation and instrumental translation (pp. 49-52). The former is related to the metatext function, meaning the translator re-presents to target text readers the original text and its relevant context of communication. In this way, faithfulness involves both the source text content and intention—a translation strategy and technique of viewing the text to be translated as “text”. The latter is at the mercy of the translator, who may disregard the source text intention and change its function—a translation strategy and technique of viewing the text to be translated as
“document”. Taking the second approach, the translator may change an informative text to an evocative one through translation.

Matthew (1992) explores translation ideology, translator’s subjectivity and techniques in the English novel “Ywain and Gawain” translated from French, mentioning that ideology has much to do with attitude (treating the novel aesthetically or purely textually), intertextuality, genre of a given era, and narrative structure (pp. 452-463). Clearly, translation ideology is multidimensional (covering source culture, target culture, source text writer, and translator), double-facet (abstract vs. specific, global vs. local, and strategy vs. technique). Tsai (2007) studies Gary Snyder’s translation of Chinese Cold Mountain poems, stating that the geocentric notion contributes to the construction of wildness and third space, which is in fact an embodiment of ideology of cultural translation (pp. 149-163).

As mentioned above, translation strategies are related to discourse ideology. XIAO and FAN (2012) define the notion of discourse ideology as the writer/speaker’s position, attitude and guideline in relation to the readers/hearers in constructing a discourse, holding that discourse ideology in translation display features, that is, politics, era, field and text type, and explores the role of discourse ideology in the Chinese-to-English translation of Chinese culture publicity, assuming that addition can reflect the translator’s subjectivity, while domestication and foreignization contribute to discourse solidarity, Pinyin being conducive to the cohesive force of Chinese inside and outside China (pp. 145-148). RU (2008) believes that translated text (target text) can exist for cultural “others” and serve as a vehicle of cultural aesthetics and pursuit of cultural ideal (pp. 50-54). Slingerland (2003) advocates the strategy of “original wording + English translation + Pinyin + original wording” for the translation of Confucianism-loaded words from Chinese to English, such as 忠 dutifulness (zhong 忠) and 孝 filial piety (xiao 孝). Slingerland’s research demonstrates the importance of Pinyin for the preservation of Chinese cultural elements. We may show the relationship between discourse ideology and strategies in translation in Figure 1:

![Figure 1. Discourse ideology and strategies in translation.](image-url)
Next, we shall show how Chinese minority culture publicity (specifically, that of Guizhou’s minority culture) can be translated from Chinese to English through two examples under the guidance the relationship between discourse ideology and strategies in translation.

**Chinese-to-English Translation of Introduction to Guizhou’s Minority Culture**

Guizhou is a province with a big number of ethnicities, including Han as well as many other minority peoples such as Miao (also known as Hmong in international academic community), Dong, Buyi and Yi, whose splendid culture has attracted many researchers at home and abroad. Jenks in his “Insurgency and Social Disorder in Guizhou: The “Miao” Rebellion 1854-1873 (1994)” writes about the Miao people’s rebellion against feudal Han majority rulers of the Ming and Qing Dynasty. The description made by Jenks is both the fighting spirit and the cohesive force of the Miao people. Harrel in his “Cultural Encounters on China’s Ethnic Frontiers” (1995) offers the readers a picture of Miao, Yi, Naxi and Zhuang’s customs covering marriage, faith and relationship with the Han people in Southwest China. Symonds in her “Gender and the Cycle of Life: Calling in the Soul in a Hmong Village” (2004) presents us with a panorama of Miao people in China’s southwest border countries, particularly Laos: their faith, customs, history and livelihood. JIN (2003, 2004) studies Guizhou’s local cultural aspects publicized in English, including some examples of Miao culture. Obviously, introducing Miao culture to international readers is conducive to a better understanding of life and work of Miao as a minority ethnicity in China. Consider the following example about Miao’s custom of long table banquet catering to guests.¹

The Miao people’s long-table feast, which enjoys a history of thousands of years, is the most splendid ceremony. It is held at weddings, and in celebrations of babies’ peaceful births and one-month-long living or villagers’ friendship exchange activities. The hosts and hostesses normally sit on the left while the guests generally take the right seats. They exchange greetings, toast to each other, and even sing as a means of joy. The foods are rich, including such traditional dishes as pork of locally-bred pigs, preserved vegetables, cakes or meats, fish, chicken, rabbit, tofu and leek. As mentioned by a Miao old man Mr. Hou from Xijiang Village, Leishan County of Guizhou Province, “the living in the village is a bless.” To prepare the feast, the villagers shall catch fish, kill pigs, and make glutinous rice cakes. For them, the toil is worthwhile. The girls dressed in beautiful ethnic costumes shall sing and dance to the beat of Lusheng played by handsome boys. A tourist from Shanghai, Mr. Shen, rode his car for a travel and happened to pass by Xijiang Village, and he was greeted by the long-table feast. He said, “Isn’t it wonderful to taste nice Miao foods while enjoying the beautiful Lusheng music?” The firecrackers peelings and the cheers of the feast diners do leave a lasting impression on any guest here. (website document, unauthored, 2011, https://baike.baidu.com/item/苗寨千人长桌宴)

Chinese, including many Chinese minority people, like to eat together as a way of conveying hospitality and team spirit by using chopsticks and the same dishes, which might sound unsanitary to some western readers. In

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¹ Chinese version: [Chinese version](https://baike.baidu.com/item/苗寨千人长桌宴)
order to remove such a sense of negative image, it is necessary to evoke “positive cultural awareness” as advocated by Chen (2013, pp. 95-100). SPEAKING model common in pragmatics advocated by Hymes (1974, pp. 55-61) is useful in this regard. SPEAKING includes 8 aspects: setting and scene (time and place of a speech act), participants (speaker and hearer), ends (including purposes, goals and intentions), act sequence (form and order of the event), key (including tone, manner or spirit), instrumentalities (forms and styles of speech), norms (social rules), and genre (kind of speech act or event).

In the English version, a genre of “description + recount” is adopted, highlighting the joyous atmosphere of Miao people’s long table banquet. Also, diners and foods are listed like a menu. In the original Chinese version there is no expression of “leave a lasting impression on any guest here”, but in the English version there is, for the purpose of inserting the translator’s evaluation, as shown in “the firecrackers peelings and the cheers of the feast diners do leave a lasting impression on any guest here”. This is a way of conveying the translator’s subjectivity as well as a way of treating the translation as DOCUMENT rather than TEXT, considering target text readers more than source text readers. The information organization techniques, the SPEAKING model, genre, and wording are the translation strategies under the perspective of discourse ideology—crediting minority people’s culture.

Consider another example concerning the festival culture of Buyi, a minority people in Guizhou2:

The Chabai Singing Festival is an important occasion for the Buyi people. Every 21st of the 6th month on the lunar calendar, the young Buyi men and women from Guizhou, Guangxi and Yunnan would gather in Chabai Township of Xingyi County, Guizhou Province for celebration. Langshao (singing) is a dating activity for them. The singing is normally accompanied by the exchange of the “Kangbao” bags with laces of embroidery. The bags go and come between them in throws, looking like colorful butterflies. It is indeed a splendid scene. (website document, unauthored, 2013, http://www.chiyou.name/page/mzfq/cbgj.htm)

The above English version can be rendered in Table 2:

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Celebration site</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Main activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Chabai Singing Festival</td>
<td>The Buyi people from Guizhou, Guangxi and Yunnan</td>
<td>Chabai Township of Xingyi County, Guizhou Province</td>
<td>Every 21st of the 6th month on the lunar calendar</td>
<td>Langshao (singing) as a dating activity, the exchange of the “Kangbao” bags with laces of embroidery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be mentioned that both English versions about the Buyi people’s festival—the Chabai Singing Festival include the main contents, with differences in evaluative expressions in the former version, such as an important occasion, colorful butterflies, indeed, and a splendid scene, which do not exist in the latter version.

Besides, the former version adopts a descriptive genre, conveying the translator’s emotions and attitude, while the latter a genre of table or menu, indicating concise and objective aspects. It is argued that the first practice contributes to praising minority culture and highlighting the translator’s subjectivity and the discourse ideology of target text whereas the second practice downplays the translator’s subjective role, making the target text seem more objective. In fact, the translation strategies are a matter of recontextualization, as Linell (1998) thinks it is

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2 Chinese version: ҰϢࢫۣ൞҃၇ቂ֥ᇗనࢫರbૄڇ୪৥ੂᄅؽ൅၂ԽԎ෠ྶđ஘ඛைႱೂґл٦໷đ൅ݺٳுb

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embodied through linguistic devices, propositions, concepts, comments, values and ideology (p. 144). XIN and LAI (2010) argue that recontextualization is an extension of intertextuality. We deem it as an interaction between translator’s subjectivity, discourse ideology and translation strategies (pp. 32-39).

Conclusion

This paper explores the impact of discourse ideology on translation strategies in the translation practice of China’s (with Guizhou’s minority people’s culture as instances) minority culture publicity from Chinese to English. The equivalence between source text and target text is not shown in form, but in function, as far as the translator’s subjectivity and discourse ideology are concerned. What the source text means positively may be something negative in the target text if the principle of faithfulness is strictly obeyed. Hence, adaptation is required in the translation process. Specifically, this means that the translation devices are at the command of the translator as long as the latter has a clear orientation toward the effects of the target text on target text implied reader and real reader. Indeed, more attention should be paid to advocating minority people’s culture in the translated version. The cultural turn of translation is worth replicating in the globalization era when harmony and equality are emphasized.

References


**Online source:**
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http://www.chiyou.name/page/mzfq/cbgj.htm