

On the Translation of Ceramic Art Works From the Perspective of Cross-Cultural Communication*

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In order to combine the aesthetic characteristics of ceramic art works with translation principles and fully convey the cultural and artistic connotations of the original works, the research was conducted and can be divided into three stages: theoretical research on translation of cross-cultural communication, appreciation of ceramic works of art, and translation practice of ceramic works of art. Through the research, we found that some methods like transliteration can be used to better promote the globalization of Chinese ceramic art and deepen cultural exchanges with other countries.

Keywords: ceramic art works, cross-cultural communication, translation strategies

Introduction

Language and cultural differences are obstacles for cross-cultural communication. Excellent translation can eliminate these obstacles and plays an indispensable role in cross-cultural communication. At present, most translation theories mainly focus on literature and business fields, with less exploration in the field of art. Masters of arts and crafts throughout the ages have created many outstanding ceramic works of art, which have attracted the attention of people in other countries, and promoted cross-cultural exchanges between China and other countries. Literature is the art of language, and art is the art of vision. Art documents show unique aesthetic and stylistic characteristics. The theory of cross-cultural communication and the principle of equivalent translation have significance for the translation of ceramic works of art. Ceramic English texts show distinctive characteristics, and the types are different, with content such as ceramic classics, scientific research documents, product albums, etc. Because the production process of ceramics is extremely complex, ceramic English texts can be said to “take each director for its own use”, so as to achieve the effect of conveying feelings (Hu, 2014, pp. 24-25+27). The purpose of this paper is to combine the aesthetic characteristics of ceramic art works with translation principles, fully convey the cultural and artistic connotations of the original works, and better realize the cross-cultural communication between ceramic art works and ceramic culture. Based on the practice of cross-cultural communication and translation of ceramic works of art, this study discusses the translation adaptation

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theory and equivalent translation principles in the cross-cultural communication and translation of ceramic works of art. At the same time, the research involves the theory of cross-cultural communication, the translation practice of ceramic works of art, the appreciation of ceramic works of art, and the analysis of translation strategies for cross-cultural communication. Through this research, people in other countries can appreciate the Chinese ceramic art works, better understand the cultural heritage and artistic meaning conveyed by Chinese ceramic art works through the cross-cultural communication and translation of Chinese ceramic art works, and promote the globalization of Chinese ceramic art as well as deepening art and cultural exchanges with other countries.

Introduction to Intercultural Communication Translation Theory

Intercultural communication translation theory studies translation based on intercultural communication theory. Before the 1980s, translation theory was limited to the category of language and translation was defined as a language-switching behavior. However, after the 1980s, translation theory began to focus on the relationship between culture and language, and translation was also redefined, which is a process of cultural exchange and integration. English translator Newmark put forward the concepts of “communicative translation” and “semantic translation”, and at the same time divided the text functions into six parts (expressive function, informative function, calling function, aesthetic function, social function, metalinguistic function), focusing on translation purpose, reader characteristics, and text types (Nida & Taber, 2004). In his book *Language, Culture, and Translation*, Nida (2004) emphasized the influence of cultural differences on translation and cross-language and cultural communication, discussed in depth the translation theory of “functional equivalence”, and pointed out the possibility of combining two majors of cross-language and cultural communication and translation. In his work *Intercultural Communication Translation*, Jin Huikang (2003) studies Chinese-English translation from a cross-cultural perspective, and mentions related translation skills, which features abundant examples and contrasting cultures. The research of translation theory has developed from the comparative study of micro-language structure to the comparative study of macro-language and culture, and from single-disciplinary research to inter-disciplinary research. Translinguistic factors such as communicative objects, cultural backgrounds, and ways of thinking also affect language translation.

Analysis of Language Characteristics Related to Ceramic Texts

The research on the translation of ceramic works of art from the perspective of cross-cultural communication is divided into three stages: theoretical research on translation of cross-cultural communication, appreciation of ceramic works of art, and translation practice of ceramic works of art. It involves the collection and reading of theoretical literature on cross-cultural communication translation, the understanding and appreciation of ceramic art works, and the translation practice of ceramic art works. A deeper appreciation of ceramic art works needs to be based on the understanding of the history of ceramic art and the creation process of ceramic art works. Chinese ceramic art has a long history of development, showing different characteristics and decorative techniques in each period, such as the vigor in the Qin and Han Dynasties, the gorgeousness in the Tang Dynasty, the elegance in the Song Dynasty, the exoticism in the Yuan Dynasty, and the delicacy in the Qing Dynasty. The common classification of artistic ceramics includes creation techniques, creation materials, and creation pits, etc., which can be divided into blue and white porcelain and color porcelain, celadon and white porcelain, Jingdezhen porcelain, and Dehua porcelain. The appreciation of ceramic works of art is generally carried out from four aspects: material, decoration, personality, and artistic conception. At the same time, the creative process of

ceramic works of art includes creative imagination, modeling design, painting and calligraphy, and ceramic firing. Viewers can understand the artistic value and cultural connotation of ceramic works through the modeling design, painting and calligraphy, materials, and other elements of ceramic works of art. For example, the chicken head pot, which was popular from the Western Jin Dynasty to the Tang Dynasty, was named after the mouth of the pot, which was in the shape of a chicken head. It was a kind of water container at that time. Chickens were the most common poultry in daily life in ancient China, and were closely related to social and economic life of human beings. As a “moral poultry”, “chicken” and “auspicious” have the same Chinese pronunciation, so the chicken head pot has been used for hundreds of years. Through the shape design and material of the chicken head pot, we can further understand its artistic value, practical function, and cultural connotation.

Translation Strategies of Ceramic Art Works From the Perspective of Cross-Cultural Communication Theory

Most of the names of ceramic art works are based on the idea of the work, or emphasize the focal point of the work, and sometimes combine literary poetry and rhetorical techniques to better show the artistic connotation of the work and bring stronger artistic enjoyment. The translation of the name of art works will affect the understanding and appreciation for foreigners (Ning, 2015, pp. 40-43). When it comes to the translation of the name of the ceramic art works and the translation of the introduction text of the ceramic art works, the literal translation of the industry terms is difficult to achieve the faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance of the translation, and appropriate use of translation strategies such as the literary translation method, source texts pronunciation, cultural explanation, and cultural image can improve the translation quality of ceramic art works (Zhu & Hu, 2005, pp. 41-42). When translating ceramic vocabulary, transliteration (transliteration of the source language into the pronunciation of the target language) not only retains the semantic Chinese cultural characteristics, but also conforms to the communication environment of language. There are three methods that generalized through translation practices.

Transliteration method: Example 1, “The natives set up the shovel in the stream, pounded and washed it finely, and made it like an adobe that is called Baibu”. The precipitation is washed and made into an adobe shape, which is called Buzi (“bu” is the same as “dun” in pronunciation, pronounced dun). The difference of phonetic symbols realizes the function of communication.

Domestication translation method: Example 2, Professor Li Leiying’s work “Shepherd Boy Welcomes Spring”. The “shepherd boy” in the title of the ceramic work cannot be simply translated into “cowboy”, because the image and responsibilities of the Chinese shepherd boy and the American western cowboy are very different. Therefore, based on the content of the works and cultural differences, it is more appropriate to translate into “A Little Chinese Buffalo-Herd Playing the Flute, Greeting the Return of Spring”.

Free translation method: Example 3, Professor Zhou Guozhen’s work “East Mountain in View” with the height of 15 cm, length of 9 cm, and width of 8 cm. Although the work can be gripped with one hand, it shows a large image and great charm. The work shows the image of a healthy, lovely, optimistic, and confident female breeder. Wrapped in a printed turban, dressed in a white and brown skirt, she is immersed in the joy after work, wiping her hands with the hem of her apron, and happily watching the plump pig under her feet with a smile on her face. On the side is a wooden spoon that has just been put down. The scarf is embroidered with five blue and white butterflies painted in gold, symbolizing “Five blessings come to the door”. By referring to historical documents, we can know that the name of “Dongshan is in sight” comes from the famous allusion “Dongshan

Reports Victory”. During the Eastern Jin Dynasty, Fu Jian, the emperor of the former Qin Dynasty, devoted all his power to the whole country, and led a powerful army to conquer the south, in order to destroy the Eastern Jin Dynasty, and then unify the whole country. In the face of incoming enemy whose strength was 10 times than his own, Xie An, the general of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, whose base was in Dongshan of Kuaiji (now Shaoxing), fought hard, sent Xie Shi, Xie Xuan, and other people to lead the army, and won a great victory in the battle of Feishui. Fu Jian fled back to the north, and the separation of the north and the south occurred again. The “Battle of Feishui” thus became a classic example of “less wins more” in world’s military history. Therefore, the so-called “East Mountain in sight” actually means victory is in sight, which shows the strong will of the Chinese people who is not afraid of any difficulties. Meanwhile, it also shows the optimistic spirit of uniting as one and helping each other. As an old says goes, the water contains salt, and you know it when you drink it. If works of art can make good use of allusions, learn from the old, and bring forth the new, it can achieve the purpose and effect of “little words contain profound meaning and have great significance for later generations”. Therefore, if it is literally translated, it should be translated into “East Mountain is in sight”, but when we understand the relevant historical allusions, it should be translated as “home in sight”.

Conclusion

The main difficulties in the translation of ceramic art works lie in cultural vocabulary, cultural background, and artistic conception. In the process of translation of ceramic works of art, in order to reproduce the cultural connotation of the target language to the largest extent, the form or interpretation of the target language can be timely changed to preserve the semantics and culture of the target language. At the same time, if the translator has a good command of the purpose of the translation task, the client’s expectation, the genre type, and the cultural knowledge in relevant field, it will be conducive to the smooth practice of translation. In translation practice, translators should be proficient in bilingual language, encyclopedic information, and cross-cultural communication awareness, so as to effectively realize the communicative function of translation.

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