

The Translation of Local Historical Allusions in the Perspective of Cross-cultural Communication—With Case Studies

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The translation of place-names plays a significant part in both translation and the process of communication. The translation of place-names is a cross-cultural communication, especially in the translation of the place-names with allusion-oriented meaning. The translators should consider the cultural meaning of the place-names and convey the cultural meaning accurately to the foreigners. This paper is based on some cases that have been searched, illustrating the translation of place-names on allusion-oriented from the perspective of cross-cultural communication consciousness and the strategy of foreignization. It also analyzes the basic guiding principles, strategies and specific translation methods on the translation of Chinese place-names, as well as the scope of various translation methods, such as literal translation, free translation, combination of both of them, and proposes the guiding principles of this kind of translation which should be “literal translation-headed, proper free translation, and appropriate interpretation”. The other principles are “following the pronunciation of the owners of proper names, adopting the established popular translated names, and using the standard pronunciation of the Chinese character” etc. Based on it, this paper discusses the translation of the place-names, such as “Zhenyuan”.

Keywords: cross-cultural communication, historical allusion, place-names, translation, guiding principles

1.Introduction

Intercultural communication plays an important part in the exchange of Chinese and Western culture. Study on intercultural communication contributes to the cultural exchange between the East and the West. But in the process of intercultural communication, we may encounter many problems, especially in some allusion-oriented words in literary works.

This paper focuses on cross-cultural communication and the strategy of foreignization aiming to analyze the translation of the historical allusions from the perspective of cross-cultural consciousness. Firstly, this paper will classify and clarify the relevant research. On this basis, it will analyze the current situation and the work that the scholars have done in order to clarify the problems and find out the possible solutions to the problem. In addition, this paper will also give the detailed illustration on the translation of the historical allusions, and point out the author’s views on this question. Secondly, this paper will explain the source and the cultural connotation of the

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place-name “Zhenyuan”. Moreover, the author will give some methods of the semantic translation on place-name. At last, it will provide some methods about the translation of the cultural allusions and the place-name, including the translation methods of the place-name “Zhenyuan” in a specific context.

2.Literature Review

There are some related researches on the translation of local historical allusion in the perspective of cross-cultural communication. It can be divided into the following aspects:

2.1 Researches on the Translation of Cultural Allusions in the Perspective of Cross-cultural Communication

胡文仲在其《跨文化交际学概论》中提到:“在翻译的过程中,人们认为只要掌握好两种语言就能保证翻译的进行,并得到良好的翻译效果。但实际的翻译经验告诉我们这样的想法是一种误解。因为在翻译过程中同样存在着两种语言所承载的文化差异问题,尤其对于英语和汉语这两种无论是从语系的归属还是从社会文化背景的角度来看差异很大的语种,所以相应的跨文化交际意识的能力对翻译的影响就突显出来了。(胡文仲, 1999, p. 8)

According to JIN Huikang,

The cultivation of intercultural communicative awareness is not simply to learn and master the English-speaking countries' history, geography, custom, but to pay attention to the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence for the translator. The cultivation of intercultural competence is a three-dimensional and probing process. (金惠康, 2002, p. 15)

In addition, other related researches have been done as the follows: ZOU Zhaolan (邹照兰, 2004), Gudykunst (2004), Samovar and Porter, (2004, p. 23).

Therefore, it is clear that researches on the translation of local historical allusions from the perspective of cross-cultural communication mainly concentrate on the exchange of English and Chinese. But it rarely involves in semantic translation from the perspective of historical allusions. The cultivation of intercultural communicative awareness is exactly important, but in the process of semantic translation of cultural allusions, it cannot be ignored.

2.2 Researches on the Sources and Cultural Background About Place-Names

According to HUANG Jiajiao, “every place-name has its certain origin and cultural connotation, which reflects the local history, geography and custom. It also involves some knowledge about geography, archaeology, sociology, literature, linguistics and ethnology” (黄家教, 1990, pp. 7-9).

In addition, other related researches have been done as the follows: LI Rulong (李如龙, 1993, p. 1), LIN Lunlun (林伦伦, 2002), DENG Huirong (邓慧蓉, 2001).

Hence, the academic research about the source and cultural background of the place-name is mainly limited to the historical evolution and cultural connotations of the name. It does not link the translation of place-names to intercultural communication, especially, some typical place-names which have historical allusions.

In summary, the related researches on the translation of local historical allusions from the perspective of cross-cultural communication are mainly concentrating on the exchange of English and Chinese. But it involves few points in translation from the perspective of historical, especially the place-name “Zhenyuan”. Considering that the translation of place name is significant for the study of the translation on literary works. This paper will focus on cross-cultural communication and the strategy of foreignization on the purpose of analyzing the

translation of the historical allusions in the view of cross-cultural awareness.

3.Theoretical Framework

3.1 The Theory of Cross-cultural Communication

Intercultural communication research is a new field emerging in United States. *The Silent Language* written by Edward Twitchell Hall in 1959 is generally regarded as the very beginning of intercultural communication. In 1959, the American cultural anthropologist Edward Hall's book *The Silent Language* was published. The word "cross-cultural communication" was first used in this book. To some extent, the publication of this book marks the birth of the theory about cross-cultural communication. Hall pays much attention to the relationship between culture and communication, and the relationship among time, space and culture in this book. He believes that the opinion on time and space may vary from person to person, especially people in different cultural background. He proposes some assumptions about how to research culture more scientifically and more carefully. He has a great impact on other scholars in the field of cross-cultural communication. Since then, there are some books on cross-cultural communication in the 1960s. At the same time, some American universities have begun to set up cross-cultural communication courses.

Hanvey thinks "cross-cultural awareness not only refers to the sensibility to different culture, but the consciousness to comprehend the target language in the author's position of the source text" (Hanvey, 1979, p. 36). JIA Yuxin deems "cross-cultural communication refers to the communication between the information-giver and the information-receiver in different cultural background. In the sense of psychology, the encoding and decoding of information between various cultural background is cross-cultural communication" (贾玉新, 1997, p. 23).

3.2 The Theory of Foreignization

Foreignization was initially put forward by American translation theorist Lawrence Venuti in his book *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* in 1995. He points out that most translators pay much attention to the fluency of the target language and rarely consider the cultural characteristics of the source language. Therefore, he raises the concept of foreignization. He deems that foreignization means the translator intends to retain the foreignness of the source text in the process of translation. The source of this translation strategy of foreignization can date back to the German philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher. He mentioned in *On the Different Methods of Translating*: "there are two ways of translation, one is not to bother the author, and let the reader close to the author as far as possible; the other is not to bother the reader, and allow the author to get to the reader as far as possible. The former is foreignization, and the latter is domestication" (Venuti, 2004, pp. 19-20).

Lawrence Venuti said "foreignization is an approach that the translator leaves the author in peace as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him", while domestication is one that the translator "leaves the reader in peace as much as possible, and moves the author towards him". By developing these two terms, Venuti meant to argue against the tendency of the transparent translation and invisibility of the translator. In his opinion, domestication is a derogative term. On the basis of Venuti's theory, Shuttleworth and Cowie in their book *Dictionary of Translation Studies* define the term of domestication in this way: "A term used by Venuti to describe the translation strategy in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for target language readers" (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2004, pp. 43-44).

4. The Place-Name and Its Translation With Allusion-Oriented Meaning

4.1 The Principles of Translation on Place-Name

4.1.1 The guiding principles of translation on place-name. On the whole, the place-name translation should follow three principles: “literal translation-headed, proper free translation, appropriate interpretation” (杨晓军, 廖莉莎, 1999). That is to say, the place-name translation should be given priority to “literal translation, striving for accurate free translation, and take care of interpretation” (康志洪, 2002).

Literal translation applies to the translation of the administrative division, for which makes the translation more standard. In the process of translation, proper-noun should adopt transliteration, while all-purpose noun should adopt free translation, such as, Wuhou dadao—the Wuhou Avenue. But it must be noted that the translation of the minority place-names does not adopt pinyin transliteration, it should be translated according to its national language, such as, Urumqi should be translated as “Urnmcu” or “Urumq” instead of “Wu-lumuqi”. Similarly, Hohhot, should be translated as “Hohhot” or “Huhehot”, not “Huhehaote”.

4.1.2 The other principles of translation on place-name. In addition, it also should obey the other three principles: “following the pronunciation of the owners of proper names, adopting the established popular translated names, using the standard pronunciation of the Chinese character”. Among them, following the pronunciation of the owners of proper names is regarded as the basic principle, and adopting the established popular translated names is an exception.

“Following the pronunciation of the owners of proper names” refers to choosing the most authoritative translation in various translation versions. Authority means reliable and trustworthy, for instance, when we translate place-name, we can refer to *Directory of The World, Ci Hai* or Wade-Giles Romanization. Taking the British Post Office as an example, in 2001, British Post Office was changed into Consignia, but many problems occurred. Britain and China have a good relationship in the field of post, thus, it is difficult for Chinese to accept this new name. One year later, the British government announced to change Consignia into Post Office again.

“Adopting the established popular translated names” refers to the translation is fixed by people through a long-term practice. This kind of translation has been widely used for many years, although it does not accord with the transliteration standard, it is unnecessary to change again, for example, Shaanxi is often translated into Shaanxi instead of pinyin Shanxi in foreign text in order to avoid confusion. Another example is “Peking University”, “Beijing University or University of Beijing”. But “Peking-University” has already become a history, and formed a certain fact. If changed, it does not only cut off the history, but brings a lot of troubles. Therefore, the “Peking University” and “Peking” should be classified as a proper-noun in memory of the old Beijing (Beijing, Peking) and a school established in Beijing.

The so-called “using the standard pronunciation of the Chinese character” refers to the translation of place-names which should be consistent with the original name of the country, the people or its general Latin alphabet spelling. Namely, when translate this kind of place-names; the translator must be conducted to accord with the original pronunciation. In spelling Chinese place-names, for example, based on the principle of “using the standard pronunciation of the Chinese character”, Chinese place-names should be carried out in accordance with the mandarin. If the place-name is not a Chinese place-name, it should be carried out in accordance with the Latin alphabet so as to reflect the minority character and achieve the purpose of more accurate spelling on

place-name. Such as: “Lasa should be written in Lhasa”. If we intend to closely joint with the international community, the most effective way is Chinese pinyin. But generally speaking, the translation of Chinese place-names often adopts standard pinyin, such as Xi’an should be translated into the Xi’an rather than Si’an.

4.2 The Historical Allusions and Their Translation

4.2.1 The definition of allusion. According to *Ci Hai*, allusion is the stories or words cited from the ancient poems (夏征农, 陈至立, 2010, p. 5). Thus, a certain allusion contains abundant cultural information, but it also causes some confusion during the process of translation, which raises the researchers’ interest.

4.2.2 The methods of allusion translation. The allusion often contains some special historical and cultural characteristics, which brings the exploration of the semantic translation on allusions. Its distinctive ethnic characteristics lead to the usual five translation methods: literal translation, annotation, amplification, substitution and free translation (朱耀先, 1997). Semantic translation should not only be similar to the target language in semantics and sentence, but also coherent with the source language. In addition, it should be in line with the context characteristics of the original style so as to achieve the fluent communication (Newmark, 2002, p. 35).

Except for literal translation, the rest four ways of translation we have mentioned belong to amplification translation. As an additional literal translation, it may be similar to the source text. Therefore, the literal translation of the historical allusions which add some explanatory notes helps to keep the original images of the text.

4.3 The Source of Place-Names and Its Translation

Every place-name has its own source and story, whether in China or in other countries, for instance, there is a river Thames and a paper *The Times* in London. It is natural for Chinese to connect Thames to *The Times*. Actually, there is no relationship between them. *The Times*, a founder of many *Times* in Britain, was originated in 1785. It is a truth that *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times* of America possess a large circulation. In order to distinguish *The Times* from the two names, *The Times* is named *London Times* or *The Times of London* in North America.

In China, for instance, the English name of Aomen is Macau, in Cantonese, its pronunciation is OuMun, but why it is so distinguishing between the two names. The reason is when Portuguese arrived in OuMun in 1533 A.D, they landed around Maa Gol, they did not know where it was, and then they asked the local fishermen, the local fishermen told them it is Maa Gol, thus they mistakenly regarded it as the local place name. Therefore, Maa Gol has been keeping up to now. If changed, it may bring a lot of troubles. Consequently, this name is adopted constantly despite that it is false.

4.4 The Source of the Place-Name Zhenyuan and Its Translation

Therefore, “Zhenyuan” is no exception. It also has its source. “Zhenguan” is regarded as the year of Tang Taizong Li Shimin, originating from *Yi-Xi Ci Xia* “the change of all things between heaven and earth has its objective rules, that is to say the ‘decorum’ ” (zhen means nature, guan means display.) (黄寿祺, 张善文, 1989, p. 46). Generally speaking, Zhen guan yuan nian (627AD) is the first year during the reign of Tang Taizong (abridged as Zhenyuan). Because the rule of Zhenguan occurred in the central region of Shaanxi province, the place-name Zhenyuan named after the first year of the historical allusion zhen guan yuan nian.

Thus, it can be translated as: Zhenyuan or Zhenyuan (A place-name which is named after the first year of Zhenguan [a period of Tang Dynasty]).

Conclusion

Based on the theory of intercultural communication and the strategy of foreignization, this paper analyzes the composition and translation of place-names. It also points out the existing problems in the translation of place-name, and raises the main methods to solve these problems. Anyhow, no matter what translation methods are adopted, translators must be in want of cross-cultural communication consciousness. Namely, the translator is required to be practical, professional, high-quality and sensitive in order that the translation can not only accord with the language habits and the cultural standard of the target language, but also spread Chinese culture.

Although the author makes great efforts to embrace all the details of the cross-cultural consciousness and the strategy of foreignization mirrored in the translation of the place-name with allusion-oriented meaning, the study on them still remains insufficient. There is no doubt that this paper will surely have some inevitable deficiencies. Hence, it is indispensable to deeply research the cross-cultural consciousness and the strategy of foreignization reflect in the translation of the place-name with allusion-oriented meaning.

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