

The Translation Strategy of Culture-Loaded Words of Song Ci

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Abstract

In the context of the new century that sees the world is undergoing the greatest changes, cultural export and infiltration serves as a crucial channel for China in promoting its cultural soft power and furthering international cooperation and exchanges. Moreover, Song Ci plays an indelible role in Chinese cultural development and culture-loaded words in Song Ci embody specific language features. For this reason, the paper analyze the versions of celebrated translators, including Xu Yuanchong, Lin yutang and Kenneth Rexroth. It also classifies the culture-loaded words and generalizes its translation strategies and method. The paper points out that the two translation strategies, domestication and foreignization, are unity of opposites which complement each other. Translation scholars should combine the advantages and disadvantages of each translation strategy with their translation purposes so as to improve the quality of translation and further contribute to the spread of Chinese culture.

Keywords

Song Ci; Culture-Loaded Words; Translation Methods.

1. Introduction

Ci, a type of Chinese poems and a new literary form rising in the Tang Dynasty, has long enjoyed its popularity in China with its peak in the Song dynasty. Song Ci, a brilliant pearl in the history of Chinese civilization, presented itself in the West in around 1950s. The past decades witnessed that a growing share of translators, Chinese translators in particular, produced a host of English translations of Song Ci, attracting the attention of a wide range of scholars at home and abroad and stimulating an increasing number of people to catch the beauty of Song Ci. Thanks to the excellent versions of great translators such as Xu Yuanchong, Yang Xianyi and Kenneth Rexroth, Song Ci not only brings the Westerners a unique window to learn the profound and splendid Chinese culture but also triggers the interests of a wide range of Western scholars and appeals to them to capture the quintessence of Song Ci. Moreover, studies on the English versions of Song Ci boast tremendous significance and value in promoting the transmission and communication of Chinese civilization, serving as a bridge for people from the East and the West to share the treasures and communicate with each other.

2. Background Information of Song Ci

2.1. Definition and Essence of Song Ci

Ci refers to a kind of musical literature, its birth, development, creation and popularization is directly linked with music. Just as mentioned before, Ci originated early with its peak in the Song Dynasty. For this reason, following generations regarded Ci as the most representative literature in the Song Dynasty and so-called Song Ci emerged. Song Ci is also blessed with alternative names for its unique features or functions. Structurally, since most of Song Ci are equipped with long and short sentences instead of the fixed number of words, Song Ci can also

be called long-and-short sentence (长短句). Functionally, most of Song Ci must be written for the sake of fitting to existing melodies for singing, thus it gains the name Quzi.

2.2. More Details of Song Ci

2.2.1. Characteristics

Characteristics abound, the salient one of Song Ci is the epigraph of name. The epigraph of name refers to the name of tunes to which Ci poems are composed. It is blessed with a fixed format and temperament, determining the rhythm and temperament of a Ci-poem. In the terms of source of the epigraph of name, there are mainly three cases. 1) It is the name of a song, like Buddhist Dancers, Love of Butterfly, etc. 2) A few words in a Ci-poem are picked as the epigraph of name, like Yi Jiangnan and Like a Dream. 3) It is the title of a Ci-poem, like Lang Taosha and Yu Gezi. Initially, Song Ci were sung to accompany songs and the melody and rhythm of a song determined its tune. After Song Dynasty, Song Ci was mainly written according to tunes and the epigraph of name was irrelevant to the content of Ci.

2.2.2. Classifications

Song Ci can be broadly divided into two schools: the gentle and subtle school and the bold and unrestrained school. Gracefulness and boldness accordingly reflect the beauty of femininity and masculinity of Song Ci. Though the two schools are not sufficient to summarize all sorts of styles and schools of Song Ci, two basic tendencies of the beauty of femininity and masculinity in Song Ci facilitate the understanding of the artistic styles of Song Ci.

The gentle and subtle school is mainly featured by its rhetoric euphemism and delicate expressions with Li Qingzhao and Liu Yong as its representatives. As for its content, it boasts subtle and delicate feelings and emotions, from romantic feelings, shedding tears over the changes of season to sad feelings at separation. In form, the school mainly enjoys gracefulness and implicit style. What's more, in the history of Song Ci for more than one thousand years, the gentle and subtle school is authentic and mainstream in terms of the quantity and quality of Ci-poems. The bold and unrestrained school, just as the name implies, is mainly featured by potent and free expressions with Sushi and Xin Qiji as its representatives. Specifically, the works of this school is also blessed with its ardent emotions, extensive artistic realm and the bold and unrestrained language (Liu Xiaoli, 2012). This paper more focuses on the gentle and subtle school by analyzing the culture-loaded words Li Qingzhao's Ci-poems.

3. The Culture-Loaded Words

3.1. The Concept of Culture-Loaded Words

The earliest conception of culture-loaded words was proposed by Xu Guozhang in his paper *Culturally Loaded words and English Language Teaching* in 1980 (Xu Guozhang, 1980). Since then, the study of culture-loaded words has attracted attention of many scholars. The scholars at home and abroad become quite split when it comes its definition. Mona Baker, a British scholar, holds that culture-loaded words are the words that boast unique cultural connotations and conceptual meanings or something that is related to religious beliefs and social customs in source language (Mona Baker, 2004:21). According to Liao Qiyi, culture-loaded words refer to those words, phrases or idioms that symbolize the unique things in a certain culture, reflecting the unique and exceptional ways of activities accumulated by a particular nation in the long evolutionary process (Liao Qiyi, 2000). In short, culture-loaded words refer to those words with national characteristics bearing long-term historical and cultural accumulation. It is easy for readers of original language to understand them, while it is relatively difficult for foreign readers due to their cultural vacancy.

3.2. The Theory of Classification and Categories of Culture-Loaded Words

Currently, there is no agreed standard of the classification of culture-loaded words, then representative ones will be demonstrated. The quartering of Wang Guo'an divides culture-loaded words into four types, including words embodying exclusive material culture (e.g moon cake and dumplings), words expressing unique spiritual culture (e.g Confucianism and Taoism), words reflecting peculiar social and economical institutions (e.g going down to the countryside and become members of production teams) and words showing distinctive customs (e.g Winter solstice and the Little New Year). As the paper said before, the classification of culture-loaded words mainly depends on the classification of culture. Deeply steeping in the soil of culture, culture-loaded words are the prominent reflection of culture of a certain nation. Meanwhile, the classification of culture proposed by Eugene A.Nida is widely accepted. Eugene A.Nida, a well-known linguist, translator and translation theorist in America, classified the culture into ecological culture, material culture, social culture, linguistic culture and religious culture. Therefore, based on Nida's classification of culture, the paper divides culture-loaded words into five categories—ecological culture-loaded words, material culture-loaded words, social culture-loaded words, linguistic culture-loaded words and religious culture-loaded words.

4. Translation Strategies, Methods and Skills of Culture-Loaded Words

Foreignization and domestication are the major two strategies applied to translate culture-loaded words. The two strategies were put forward by Lawrence Venuti, a noted American translation theorist, in his book *The Translator's Invisibility A History of Translation* in 1995. As two translation strategies, domestication and foreignization are the unity of opposites and complement each other. In other words, absolute domestication and foreignization do not exist. From the aspect of foreignization and domestication, some typical translation methods and skills will be elaborated as follows.

4.1. Application of Foreignization

Foreignization refers that translators should try their best not to disturb the author and encourage the target readers to get closer to the author (Schleiermacher, 2006: 229). In translation, it means yielding to the linguistic features of foreign cultures and absorbing foreign language expressions, which requires translators to approach the author and adopt the expressions corresponding to the source language used by the author to convey the content of the original. In short, translators should take the culture of source language as the destination. The purpose of foreignization is to consider the differences of national cultures, preserve and reflect the characteristics of exotic features and language styles, and to keep an exotic atmosphere for target readers. Foreignization enjoys following features. (1) Not completely following the discourse norms of the target language; (2) Sometimes choosing an incoherent and obscure style; (3) Intentionally retaining original materials of the source language.

4.1.1. Transliteration

Transliteration refers to a form of translation based on the pronunciation of the original language (e.g "Xiang Yu"-“项羽”and “Hsi T'ing”-“溪亭”). Generally speaking, such versions no longer have their own original meaning, but only retain their phonetic and written forms. According to Fang Mengzhi, “When there is no equivalent expression of the source language in the target language, words and expressions in the source language can not be directly translated into target language text. In this case, transliteration should be applied as the main method. It is often used in translating person's name, place's name and new terms” (Fang Mengzhi, 2003: 96). Transliteration can preserve the exotic flavor of the source language, thus enriching the native language. In addition, transliteration can also avoid cultural loss or semantic incompleteness caused by improper translation methods.

4.1.2. Literal Translation

Literal translation serves as one of the most basic yet important translation methods to deliver the original culture for foreign readers. According to Newmark, "The SL grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest TL equivalents but the lexical words are again translated singly, out of context" (Newmark, 2001: 46). "Literal translation is also called word-for-word translation by Cicero (106-46 BC) and Horace (65-8 BC) and metaphrase by John Dryden (1631-1700). This translation method ideally divides the SL text into individual words and translates these word-segments one at a time" (Mona Baker, 2004: 125). In other words, to maintain the exotic flavor of a certain culture and faithfully transmit its cultural knowledge, literal translation is a desired choice.

4.2. Application of Domestication

Domestication refers that translators should try their best not to disturb the readers and encourage the author to get closer to the target readers (Schleiermacher, 2006: 229). Domestication is all about to localize the source language, taking the target language or target readers as the destination and thus conveying the content of the original context by adopting the expressions that target readers are accustomed to. Domestication entails versed knowledge about target language, requiring the translator to be closer to target readers like a native author. To ensure that the original author and the target readers have a direct dialogue, the translation must be a native and idiomatic. Domestication facilitates readers to digest the translation better and also enhances the readability and appreciation of the translation.

4.2.1. Free Translation

Newmark argues that "free translation reproduces the matter without the manner, or the content without the form of the original. Usually it is a paraphrase much longer than the original, a so-called intralingual translation, often prolix and pretentious, and not translation at all" (Newmark, 2001: 46-47). In short, free translation refers to only keeping the content rather than the form of the original (e.g. "confused shadows-"影沉沉" and "deep, profoundly deep"- "深深几许"). In the translation of Li Qingzhao's Ci-poems, free translation is mainly adopted when there is no exact English equivalent. According to Li Qing, the ideal free translation should not only convey the cultural connotation of the original but also consider the readability of the translation and it is necessary to keep a proper balance between them (Li Qing, 2015). As for this reason, free translation will be adopted to transmit more abundant cultural knowledge and thus avoid the misunderstanding of target reader.

4.2.2. Amplification

There are significant differences in vocabulary and syntax between English and Chinese. Word-by-word translation probably leaves the translation stiff and obscure, and sometimes even deviates from the original meaning. Various bridging skills are needed in translation, and amplification is one of the representative one. According to Xiong Bing, amplification refers to the addition of some words, sentences or paragraphs to the translation according to the needs of the morphology, syntax, semantics, rhetoric or style of the target language so as to better express the original ideological content or achieve a specific translation purpose (Xiong Bing, 2014:86). Some words will be added to clarify and naturalize the translation, including verbs, adjectives, adverbs, nouns, quantifiers, modal particles, category words and so on. Amplification will also be applied to meet the needs of grammar and to complement the background and cultural knowledge.

5. Conclusion

As one of the peaks of Chinese literature, Song Ci contains authentic Chinese flavor and endless artistic values. Moreover, culture-loaded words entail treasured and exotic culture of a certain

language, which brings us to a world brimming with its unique characteristics. For this reason, the paper compares and analyzes the translation of culture-loaded words of Song Ci and accordingly generalizes major translation strategies, methods and skills. Generally speaking, foreignization presents the authentic flavor of the original and domestication more focuses on the fluency and intelligibility of translation. This paper holds that pure foreignization or domestication do not exist and the two translation strategies are related with each other. Our young translators should weigh all pros and cons of a certain strategy and take into account their own purpose of translation.

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