

Translators' Subjectivity in External Publicity Translation

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Abstract

As a means of making China known to the outside world and a bridge between China and foreign countries, external publicity translation functions as a helper for the target language readers to learn more about China. Therefore when it comes to the translation materials bearing cultural gaps and items specific to China, translators have the need to make these materials understandable to foreign readers, that is, adding further interpretation and explanation before and during the translation process.

Key words: External publicity translation; Translator's subjectivity; Explainer translation

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INTRODUCTION

The past two decades since China's reform and opening up have witnessed the ever-growing international communication in China. And the understanding on China's external publicity, an important part of international communication, has been clearer than before. At the same time, there exist some translated English articles grammatically correct but not suitable for external publicity. It is thus necessary to probe into the translation strategy of C-E translation of external publicity materials on the basis of the functions of China's external publicity. External publicity activities are to put our

country's policies, economic system, cultural tradition and scenic spots into English to enable foreigners to further understand China. Entering the 21st century, the external publicity work becomes more urgent and significant with large number of foreigners coming to China and bearing a strong desire to learn more about China. One of the major purposes of external translation is to display the great achievements in China's political, economic and social life and introduce to foreigners the traditional Chinese culture, history and natural landscapes. Thus external publicity translation aims at helping foreigners know more about China. This purpose highlights the readability of the target text and the response of target reader. Therefore it is reasonable for translators to exert subjectivity before and during translation process, making adaptations of the source text before translation and choosing reader-centered translation strategies during translation.

1. TRANSLATOR'S SUBJECTIVITY

A prominent feature of external publicity is that it involves the translation of information related to Chinese to foreign languages and spreading these information through books, journals, newspapers, radio, television, Internet, international conferences and other medias. This characteristics poses higher requirements for translators. Not only should they follow the three basic translation standards --"faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance", they also need to be familiar with and abide by the "three close" principle (close to the practice of China's development, close to foreign readers' demand for Chinese information, close to foreign readers' thinking habits) (Huang, 2005). This requires translators first have a good understanding of original Chinese and then put the information represented inside into foreign languages idiomatically, which involves some kind of translator subjectivity in dealing with the translation materials and through the translation process. translators' subjectivity

The target readers of external publicity is the foreigners who know very little or a little about China, therefore external publicity translation acts as a window for them to know and deepen their understanding of China. Therefore, how to put our country's current policy, economic system, the splendid traditional culture and modern civilization spread by means of Chinese-English translation is heralded the main task of translators.

External publicity translation targets at conveying information related to China to target readers accurately and smoothly. Translators' subjectivity refers to the translator as the translation subject exert initiative in the translation process under the premise of respect the original authors, that is the translator needs to have cultural awareness, humanity knowledge and aesthetic creativity. To achieve better translation effect, it is necessary for the original text go through "handling" before the actual translation process. This "handling" includes: (1) handling of the original language including style, style, discourse, etc. in respect for the original main information, and under the premise of fully understanding the original spirit to cater for the English audience acceptance (2) weighing and screening to adjust the content of the original material to make the translation in conformity with English readers' psychology and thinking habit.

2. PRETREATMENT BEFORE TRANSLATION

There exist differences between China and West in the aspects of customs, geographical environment, production methods, and social structures, thus people in these two cultures form different thinking patterns, cultural traditions and aesthetic habits. Han Nationality usually resort to the description of objects to express themselves; in writing they incorporate the objective description into the expression of their inner feelings. (Jia Wenbo, 2000, 73) While westerns emphasize analytical abstract reasoning and thus the representation of the objects is attached great importance to in writing. The following is an example:

在山东省委、省政府的领导下，在滨州市委、市政府的亲切关怀和具体指导下，我们在这里隆重举行滨州第二届冬枣节……

In the above speech delivered on the opening ceremony of Date Festival several polite formulas appear such as 亲切关怀, 具体指导, 隆重举行. If they are translated word by word it will be hard to achieve the publicity effect. The translator needs to compress the original in accordance with English writing habits. Now the translation is as follows:

Ladies and gentlemen:

I have the honor here to declare the second Date Festival open. I'd like to take this opportunity to convey our gratitude to those whose support and assistance have made the festival possible.

Chinese language tends to use numerous luxuriant and rhetoric words in description which bear little information. In contrast the English language stresses the use of concise words; its sentence structure is relatively more formic and neat. Look at the following Chinese sentence: 她奔腾不息, 勇往直前, 忽而惊涛裂岸, 势不可挡, 使群山动容; 忽而安如处子, 风平浪静, 波光潋滟, 气象万千。

The above sentence is good example of the use of rhetoric words, which play a key role to create grandeur. It is common to find such usage in Chinese. But if translated word to word it certainly will give the readers a feeling of repetition. Therefore translators only need to put words conveying actual meanings into English such as “奔腾”、“直前”、“裂岸”、“群山”、“惊涛” while ignoring the luxurious descriptive words. Here is one suggested version: It tears and boils along turbulently through the mountains and, at some place, flows on quietly with a sedate appearance and gling ripples.

In addition, the four character phrases are prevalent in Chinese text structuring as the four characters words which parallel in structure are more effective at expressing. Of some four character words as 圆满结束, 不幸遇难, 胜利召开, 重要讲话, 重要指示, the adjectives modifying beforehand have no practical meaning, and thus can be left out in translation. As to the dual structure four characters, the two phrases consisting are symmetrical with similar meanings to achieve the effect of stress; translators may just put one phrase into English to fuse the meanings of the two phrases into English. The following are two examples.

1. 他虽然带着五分酒意, 却装做十分醉的, 前颠后偃, 东倒西歪。【施耐庵:《水浒》】He was not really drunk, but pretended he was intoxicated and staggered along.

2. 其中有一篇, 大意仿佛说, 戏是大敲、大叫、大跳, 使看客头昏脑眩。【鲁迅:《社戏》】One chapter made the point that the Chinese opera is so full of gongs and cymbals, shouting and jumping, that it makes the onlookers' heads swim.

In the translation of Chinese four character words it is of importance not to be interfered by the Chinese thing patterns use put these phrases into idiomatic English.

The prominent feature of Chinese sentences is parataxis that is the text is coherent by the cohesive of meaning so the Chinese text form is comparatively loose, while the English text depends more on the connectives linking the whole passage. For example, in news narrative order Chinese text follows the time order while the English text is the opposite.

“由于四川是重要的大米和猪肉产地, 因此, 四川地震也再度引起了人们对通胀的担忧。上证综指收盘下跌2.8%, 收于2794.75点, 为15个月来最低收盘点位。”
“The Shanghai Composite Index fell 2.8% to 2794.75, its lowest close for more than 15 months as inflation

worries were rekindled by the earthquake in Sichuan, an important producer of rice and pork.”(Zhang Jiang, 2008) The above news report starts with the cause of Sichuan earthquake with the result the Shanghai Composite Index falling. While the English news report usually puts the result at the very beginning so its English version begins with the effect of the earthquake to conform to the reading habit of English readers.

Linear graduation of clauses is one of the typical character of Chinese sentence structure. As to this kind of sentence structure, several clauses are lined up in time order and the relation between each clause is implicitly linked by meaning of each clause. While the English sentence features tree structure with subordinate clauses embedded and the sentences are linked to a whole paragraph by explicit connectives. The differences in sentence structure reflect the different thinking mode between Chinese and the West. Bearing this in mind, translators need to adopt Western mode of thinking in external publicity translation. Otherwise it is hard for them to get natural version conforming to English language norms. Here is an example.

上海银舟大厦位于上海浦东陆家嘴金贸区,东临主干线源深路,西濒该地区的集中绿地双子广场,占地5,037平方米,楼面面积37,700平方米,高100米,28层,为商贸结合的高级办公楼。

Located in the Pudong Lujiazui financial center, the 100-metre-high Shanghai Silver Boat Mansion is a 28-story deluxe commercial and office building, standing on a site of 5037 square meters with a GFA of 37,700 square meters. It faces on the east the Yuanshen Road, one of the city's main roads, and the Shuangzi Square green zone on the west. (Jia Wenbo, 2000, p.39)

The above Chinese sentence is rather loose with several short clauses and when it is put English these short clauses are represented by two long English sentences with modifiers, prepositions and participle phrases which make the English sentence look like a tree with SV as the root and other subordinate sentence elements as the branches. Besides the relation between the two sentences are explicitly shown in the English version.

3. TRANSLATORS' SUBJECTIVITY IN THE PROCESS OF TRANSLATION

Our country has a long and splendid culture, numerous famous masterpieces, of which many are not familiar to foreigners, so when it comes to literacy, masterpieces and traditional history explanatory translation is needed. Confucius, a household name in China may be unknown or not known well to some foreigner so when the original text mentions Confucius translators may use annotations to make a brief introduction of Confucius. “在中国一提到孔子,上至白发苍苍的老人下至天真幼稚的顽童,无人不知,无人不晓,人们为了纪念他,在许多地

方都建有他的寺庙,海南也不例外。”“The Temple in the memory of Confucius (551 b. c. - 479 - b.c), a household name (among old and young) could be found in many places across indicates the country, Hainan, China's second largest island next to Taiwan, is no exception.” In addition instead of putting 海南 into “Hainan” a simply unfamiliar district name, the translator added extended information about this region (the second largest's island) to enrich the target readers' understanding of this place.

Many cities in China have nicknames, such as Taiwan (Treasure Island), Harbin (Ice City), Shanghai (Shen City), Kunming (Spring City), Chongqing (Mountain City), Jinan (City of Spring). These nicknames are well-known to Chinese but not foreigners, who know little of Chinese geography. So in the translation of geographical names explanation is needed. For example: “天府之国”旅游业今年实现开门红,1月份游客人数达到88万,比去年同期增加18%。

There is no doubt that “天府之国” in the above Chinese sentence refers to Sichuan but foreigners do not have any idea of nickname of Sichuan so further explanation is needed here -- “Land of Abundance” (southwest China's Sichuan Province).

The target language readers of external publicity are foreigners. Foreigners are not Chinese. This point should be born in the minds of translators. The cultural and language gaps resulted from distinct traditions, histories and social systems pose difficulties to cross-cultural communication and affect the communication effect. On choosing translation strategies, translators have to follow the principle “clarifying the original text and conveying the original message exactly” (Yuan Xiaoning, 2005:75), and take full consideration of the translation effect (Epstein, Lin Xuquan, Shen Suru, 2000:2). Then in style, diction and cultural background, translators should meet the requirements of foreign readers faithfully to reproduce the original meaning. (Yuan Xiaoning, 2005).

Unique Chinese words are those lexical words which can reflect Chinese culture, exhibit Chinese connotations and radiate Chinese flavor. Chinese-specific words are unique to the Chinese and nowhere in the world can be found equivalents for such words perfectly. Having no cultural equivalents in the English speaking culture, particular Chinese expressions require a keen cultural awareness and use of appropriate strategies in order to accomplish a satisfactory and accurate translation. Chinese specific things, phenomenon and specific vocabulary related constitute an indispensable component and also the difficult section of external publicity translation. These specific vocabulary have no existing correspondences in English so translators need to give free rein to their subjectivity to effectively convey the original message. On the political system with Chinese characteristics, economic policies, culture, historical tradition in the process of translation to explanation.

For instance if “打破大锅饭” only translated as “smash the big rice pot”, foreign readers may have the idea that something wrong is with the rice cooked pot or the pot broke because somebody did it out of anger. So it is needed add such explanation that “big rice pot” is actually a kind of distribution system under the planned economic system. It can translated to “break the” big rice pot “system or the absolute egalitarianism whereby everyone gets eh usual pay and benefits irresponsible of his performance”.

Next is the explanatory translation of Lantern Festival by a journalist of Reuters. “A shopping mall in Shanghai is decorated with red lanterns to mark the Lantern Festival, which falls on February 26th this year, the 15th of the first month of the lunar calendar. The festival traditionally features big fireworks displays, mass performances of yankou folk dances, land boats, stilt walking, lion dances and dragon dances. Other main activities are to appreciate the bright landscape highlighted by colored lanterns, and to enjoy yuan hokia or small glutinous flour balls with sweet or meat fillings.” Lantern Festival is Chinese specific, which is fresh to foreigner. To enable foreigners to have a clear idea of this festival, the author made detailed description of it.

Moreover it is also necessary to make further explanation of Chinese dishes. For instance these two traditional dishes 狮子头, 佛跳墙 can be translated into “pork meat ball” and “Buddha-jumps-over-the-wall (a Chinese delicacy with more than 20 ingredients) respectively. Likewise Chinese specific organizations and political slogans also need explanatory translation.

For instance 全国政协译 “CPPCC:the Chinese people’s Political Consultative Conference, a national advisory body with considerable influence”, 人民民主专政 “the Chinese People’s Democratic Dictatorship, the Chinese political system under which democratic rights are given to the people and dictatorship is exercised over their enemies”, 抓大放小译 “manage large enterprises well while easing control over small ones”.

CONCLUSION

It comes to the conclusion that as to external publicity translation translators need to exert their subjectivity to handle the source text before translation and do such processing work as deleting some parts of the source material, adding background information and make explanations when it comes to Chinese specific things and phenomenon.

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