

On the C-E Translation of Culture-Specific Expressions from the Perspective of Eco-Translatology: A Case Study of English Translation of Report on the Work of Nanchang Municipal Government

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Abstract

With the deepening of globalization, China has closer ties with other countries in the world. Under this premise, the translation of external publicity is particularly important. As one of the external publicity texts, the Report on the Work of the Government (RWG) involves many fields such as social development, national planning and people's livelihood. And for translating Culture-specific Expressions, it is a clear aim to enable readers from other countries based on different cultural contexts to understand our government's work in the past year and define the objectives, policies and measures for future work via the translation. The Report on the Work of Nanchang Municipal Government (RWNMG) mainly deals with the summary of Nanchang's work and the prospect of all aspects of the government's work scheme in the future. It involves some new concepts and new terms with distinctive local characteristics and features of the times. Eco-Translatology was put forward by Professor Hu Gengshen in 2001, and it constantly explores translation from the perspective of ecology and gives a new description of the essence and process of translation based on the principles of "adaptation" and "selection". Professor Hu studies the relationship between the Eco-environment of translation and the translator and puts forward three-dimensional transformation. Under the guidance of Eco-Translatology, this translation practice attempts to discuss the translation of the culture-specific expressions in RWNMG at lexical level, syntactic level and rhetorical level. The purpose is to analyze the translation of culture-specific expressions in RWNMG, and summarize the relevant translation methods and skills through the adaptation and selection of three-dimensional transformation from the linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension. This paper aims to find methods to deal with English translation of culture-specific expressions, so as to improve the quality of the translation.

Keywords: eco-translatology, report on the work of nanchang municipal government, culture-specific expressions, three-dimensional transformation

1. Introduction

With the continuous improvement of China's influence, Report on the Work of the Government (RWG), as an important channel for the outside world to understand China's development, is of great significance for foreign people to realize China. This thesis mainly studies the translation of publicity materials, namely Report on the Work of Nanchang Municipal Government (RWNMG). Based on the practice of English translation of culture-specific expressions, this paper explores the strategies of English translation under the guidance of Eco-translatology. Due to the linguistic particularity of culture-specific expressions, it is not suitable to use word-for-word mechanical translation in this practice, which can not achieve the effect of information transmission. Moreover, the culture-specific expressions in the RWNMG cover a variety of language forms, which can be roughly divided into the following categories: the lexical features, syntactic features and rhetorical features. These expressions not only reflect the times but also fully reflect the trend of society, so the translation should adapt to reflection of these characteristics, in order to accurately convey the connotation and meaning of culture-specific expressions and achieve practical results. Based on this premise, the author chooses the Eco-translatology. This paper combines the English translation of the culture-specific expressions with the Eco-translatology, coupled with the translation methods under the three-dimensional transformation strategy, with an aim to improve the translation

quality and conform to the habits of target language in order to enable target readers to accept culture-specific expressions.

RWNMG is an official document, reflecting the work done by the Government in the past year, and the work and the goals expected to be achieved in the coming year. RWNMG is a non-literary text, but unlike scientific, technological articles and tourism texts, it expresses in a serious and firm tone with simple writing, which aims to analyze ideas, elucidate viewpoints and achieve the purpose of political publicity.

The translation of the culture-specific expressions in the RWNMG can not only improve the level of translation, but also enhance cross-cultural communication. The study of its translation can bring Chinese culture abroad and make people all over the world realize the charm of Chinese.

2. Theoretical Framework

Eco-translatology is an interdisciplinary field, which opens a new chapter in the study of translology and is the result of the interpenetration of translology and ecology. This theory was first put forward by Professor Hu Gengshen, a Chinese scholar. As an original theory, it reflects the active exploration of Chinese scholars on the construction of the theoretical system of Chinese translology.

The basic theory of Eco-translatology simply includes translation methods as "three-dimensional" transformation. That is to say, under the principle of "multi-dimensional adaptation and adaptive selection", it relatively focuses on the adaptive selection transformation of linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension [1].

2.1 Three Dimensional Transformations

Linguistic dimension refers to the translator's adaptive selection and transformation of language forms in the translation process, which is reflected in the different levels of lexical, syntactic and so on[2].

Cultural dimension refers to the translator's attention to the transmission and interpretation of cultural connotation in the translation process[3]. At the same time, the translator understands the cultural differences between the source language and the target language to prevent the target readers from misinterpreting culture from the perspective of the target language culture.

Communicative dimension is the translator emphasis on the adaptive selection and transformation of bilingual communicative intention in the process of translation[4]. In addition, it is also requires the translator to focus on whether the communicative intention in the original text is realized in the translation.

2.2 Application of the Theory to the Task

Eco-translatology emphasizes that the translator's "adaptation" and "selection" are the essence of the translation process[5]. In the process of translation, the translator makes adaptive selection according to the Eco-environment of source text through multi-dimensional adaptation, and pays attention to the culture differences between source language and target language, so as to realize the selection of the target text.

It is common knowledge that the external publicity translation plays an important role in establishing a good international image and enhancing the outside world's understanding of our country. In other words, the main purpose of external publicity translation is not to provide literary appreciation to the target readers, but to achieve its own effect in translation. Thus, the translator takes all factors into full consideration to achieve the purpose of the original text by translating in a way that the target readers can accept.

Both Eco-translatology and external publicity translation emphasize the central role of the translator. Under the guidance of Eco-translatology, in order to achieve the effect of the translation of RWNMG, the translator should make adaptive selections from three aspects: language, culture and communication.

3. Case Analysis

3.1 Features of Culture-specific Expressions in RWNMG

As an official document, the Report on the Work of Nanchang Municipal Government (RWNMG) has clear objectives and strict structure. In order to complete the translation fluently, the author divides these features into following categories:

3.1.1 Lexical Features

The four-character structure of Chinese refers to a fixed form composed of four Chinese characters, usually closely linked in grammar and form a fixed meaning, which constitute a major feature of Chinese[6]. This way of expression is concise and rich in the traditional culture of the Chinese nation. In form, it is short and symmetrical

and has the beauty of balance; from the phonologically point of view, it is of usually four syllables, with a strong sense of rhythm and rhythmic beauty; semantically, this structure has cognitive advantages and is easy to remember. Therefore, the use of this structure in Chinese text can play an important role in realizing the multiple functions of a publicity text, like “鼓励支持” and “陈规陋习”.

3.1.2 Syntactic Features

Non- subject sentence refers to a sentence with only a predicate but no subject. In Chinese expression, the subject is often removed to form elliptical sentences, which is also applicable to the language of government documents. It is universally acknowledged that hypotaxis and parataxis are the most significant features of Chinese and English. The connection between Chinese sentences often depends on the internal connection of the sentence, and the predicate verb is in an independent and strong position, weakening the syntactic function of the subject, so the subject is often omitted in Chinese[7]. In the RWNMG, there are many non-subject sentences, which are basically presented in the form of "predicate + object". This kind of sentence pattern is suitable to strengthen the tone and emphasize the serious atmosphere.

Example: 深入实施新兴产业倍增工程。重点打造四大战略性新兴产业支柱产。

3.1.3 Rhetorical Features

The first rhetorical feature in RWNMG is metaphor. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, metaphor means the words or phrases of one object or action is used to replace another object or action to imply similarity or analogy between them. This kind of rhetoric can highlight language features and make it vivid. For example: “僵尸企业”.

The second rhetorical feature is the tautology, which refers to a figure of speech in which the same idea is repeated in different words. For example: “释放每一份力量、花好每一分钱、做好每一件事”.

The last is the antithesis, which is a rhetoric way of expressing two relative or similar meanings with a pair of phrases or sentences with the same number of words, the same structure and symmetrical meaning. Antithesis can highly summarize the content to be expressed, enhance the sense of rhythm and facilitate memory. For example: “不为说不找理由，只为说行想办法” and “美丽南昌，幸福家园”.

3.2 Three-dimensional Transformation in Culture-specific Expressions

"Three-dimensional" transformation is the generalization and summary of translation methods under the Eco-translatology, which refers to linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension. In the translation of culture-specific expressions, the translator must adapt to the translational Eco-environment of the target language culture, and then make a selection to adapt to the translational Eco-environment of the target language from the perspective of the translational Eco-environment[8].

In this part, based on the three-dimensional transformation, the author mostly uses the translation methods of literal translation and free translation, combined with the translation techniques like amplification and omission to analyze the translation.

3.2.1 Linguistic Dimension

Due to the different thinking patterns between China and the West, there will be differences in language expressions. Chinese emphasizes the meaning relevance of sentences, while English focuses on the logical relevance and the integrity of sentence structures[9]. Therefore, the translator understands the differences between the two languages and makes adaptive selections in the form of language in the culture-specific expressions translation, so as to achieve the target linguistic Eco-environment.

3.2.1.1 Translation of Four-character Structures

Example 1: 稳步推进绿色殡葬改革，破除陈规陋习，培育文明乡风。

TT: We will steadily push forward the reform in ecological burials and abandon the outmoded conventions, so as to foster local civilization.

Analysis: “陈规陋习” roughly means outdated and unreasonable rules or habits. This four-character structure is a compound expression in Chinese, and the two parts have similar meanings. The two words “陈” and “陋” describe what is out of date and is not accepted now, and “规” and “习” refer to the regulations and customs. Therefore, translator adopts omission to render it into “outmoded conventions” according to the principle of brevity of English, so as to fit the translational Eco-environment.

Example 2: 全面落实“藏粮于地、藏粮于技”战略，坚决守住耕地红线，加快推进高标准农田建设，大力实施粮安工程，确保农产品有效供给。

TT: We will carry out the grain strategy to improve the agricultural production capacity through technology, keep the red line of farm land area, accelerate the construction of high-standard farm land, and implement the food safety project, so as to ensure the effective supply of agricultural products.

Analysis: The expressions “全面落实”, “坚决守住”, “加快推进”, and “大力实施” are all unique Chinese expressions with modifiers. In the original text, the modifiers like “全面”, “坚决”, “加快” and “大力” are used to strengthen the expressive power of the language. While in English, all the modifiers are omitted according to its language style of conciseness. For example, “全面落实” is translated into “carry out” instead of “fully carry out” in that the expression “carry out” contains the meaning of “fully”. Similarly, the expressions “坚决”, “加快” and “大力” are all omitted. In external publicity translation, the translator focuses on communicating the main meaning and removing redundant information. Therefore, the translator adopts omission to achieve the English Eco-environment.

3.2.1.2 Translation of Non-subject sentence

Example 3:加强精细化管养。

TT1: we will implement the meticulous managements to urban projects

TT2: Meticulous managements will be implemented for urban projects

Analysis: In the original text, the “精细化管养” refers to the meticulous management which is implemented on urban projects. Similarly, there is no subject in this sentence. There are two principles for the non-subject sentence translation, that is, to add subjects and to change active voice into passive voice or imperative sentence. The translator selectively renders it into passive voice. In the TT1, the key point of the sentence is subject “we”, while in TT2, the key point is the “meticulous managements”. After careful consideration, the translator chooses TT2 which can highlight the subject “meticulous managements” which foreign readers can get to the point right away. According to Eco-translatology, the author selects the passive voice so as to achieve the linguistic Eco-environment of the target language.

3.2.1.3 Translation of Run-on Sentence

Example 4:紧紧扭住做大做强做优大南昌都市圈的薄弱环节和重点工作，大兴调研之风，加强新型智库建设，坚持问题导向补齐能力“短板”，提升各项事业改革攻坚、开放提升、创新突破的操作水平；

TT: we will firmly seize the weakness and key tasks of enlarging and strengthening Nanchang metropolitan area by carrying out extensive research, strengthening the construction of new think tank, adhering to problem-solving orientation and making up for the deficiencies in competence, so as to promote the operational level of various undertakings in reform, opening-up and innovation.

Analysis: This sentence in the original text is a typical Chinese run-on sentence, which consists of four short sentences with no conjunctions. In English, the relationship between sentences needs to be expressed through explicit conjunctions. The translator first analyzes the sentence structure and adds the missing subjects “we” in the sentence. After that, through analysis, the translator finds that the subjects of the whole sentence are the same. In addition, the translator finds that the inherent logical relationship of the sentence, “.....做优大南昌都市圈.....” is the overall guidance of the work, “大兴调研之风.....”, “加强.....” and “提升各项事业.....” refer to the work steps and objectives respectively. Thus, the translator combines the last three short sentences into one sentence. For this sentence translation, the translator adopts the translation technique of combination to better adapt to the Eco-environment of target language.

3.2.1.4 Translation of Rhetorical Features

Example 5: 提高土地产出率，加快处置“僵尸企业”“僵尸项目”，为新产业、新动能腾出空间。

TT: we will follow the differential assessment system on the park to increase land output rate and cut down "zombie enterprises" and "zombie projects" to make room for new industries.

Analysis: “僵尸企业”adopts the rhetorical device of “metaphor”, which refer to enterprises that lose the ability of self-development and have to rely on government subsidies or bank loans to survive. “僵尸企业” is characterized by long-term dependence, which has something in common with zombies' dependence on blood. The translator renders “僵尸企业” literally into “zombie enterprises”, which makes foreign readers understand the expression vividly through metaphor, so as to adapt to the translation Eco-environment from linguistic dimension.

Example 6:着眼于“释放每一份力量、花好每一分钱、做好每一件事”

TT: We should focus on our work to make the greatest effort to do everything well

Analysis: The two clauses in the original text “释放每一份力量、花好每一分钱” are characterized by tautology, which is a unique linguistic feature of Chinese. It emphasizes government’s determination in their work, that is, making the greatest effort to do everything well. The three clauses have internal logical relations, “做好每一件事” is the result of the government’s pursuit, “释放每一份力量” and “花好每一分钱” are the prerequisites. English emphasizes language brevity and accuracy. Thus, the translator first adjusts the sentence logic from the linguistic dimension, and then uses free translation to express it. In this way, the translation is more in line with the linguistic habits of the target readers.

3.2.2 Cultural Dimension

In the translation of the culture-specific expressions, the translator not only translates the language, but also excavates the cultural background, and makes a comprehensive comparison of the cultures behind the Chinese and Western languages[10]. Due to the differences between Chinese and western cultures, the translator is required to find a balance between the source text and the target text on the basis of being faithful to the cultural connotations, so as to adapt to the cultural Eco-environment of the target language.

Example 7:巩固和完善农村基本经营制度，深化农村承包地“三权”分置

TT: We will consolidate the improvement of the basic management system in rural areas by deepening the separation of the three rights (the ownership, contract right and management right) of rural contracted land.

Analysis: This is a rural land contract law amended in 2014. Under the law, the three rights have their own functions as well as their overall utility, which is similar to the separation of (three) powers in the United States. Therefore, the translator uses it for reference and literally translates it into “separation of the three rights” plus the annotation to explain what the three rights are. The translation not only conveys the cultural connotation, but also realizes the balance of cultural Eco-environment.

Example 8:大力开展“治脏”行动

TT: We will launch a vigorous fight to keep our city clean with strict standard

Analysis: The term “治脏行动” in the original text is an environmental protection plan which aims to clean up the city. In the Chinese expressions, people tend to compare a plan or strategy to a battle or fight, which shows people’s determination to complete the plan. Therefore, the translator uses “launch a fight” to describe the action. Through this metaphor, English readers can not only realize the meaning of the translation vividly, but also get to know the cultural connotation in the translation.

Example 9:深入推进“不见面”审批

TT: further push forward the on-line government approval

Analysis: “不见面” is a typical oral expression with Chinese characteristics. “不见面审批” is the inherent requirement of building a service-oriented government, which means that people don’t need to be present in person to go through approval process in government. It is an efficient way of government work. However, this kind of expression is difficult for target readers to understand the intended meaning in literal translation. Therefore, the translator uses free translation to render it in a concise way. In this way, the translation not only conveys the meaning but also fully adapts to the target reader’s Eco-environment from cultural dimension.

Example 10:统筹推进“洪”字号系列人才工程

TT1: The series talent projects on “Hong” brand will be promoted

TT2: The series talent projects on “Hong” brand (Hong, an abbreviation for Nanchang city) will be promoted

Analysis: In the original text, the word “洪” is an abbreviation for Nanchang city Nanchang City. According to Chinese history, Hong city is the ancient name of Nanchang. Translator renders it with transliteration, so as to introduce the historical background of Nanchang to foreign readers. While from the perspective of cultural dimension, in order to convey the cultural connotation of the original text more accurately, the author adopts annotation to translate it as “Hong” brand (Hong, an abbreviation for Nanchang city).

3.2.3 Communicative Dimension

The ultimate goal of translation is to meet the needs of communication between people and to achieve smooth communication[11]. Therefore, the translator has to consider the non-linguistic factors such as the cultural background, cognitive context and pragmatic mode of the target readers, which is crucial for readers to correctly understand the translation and make it achieve the expected communicative purpose.

Example 11:全面贯彻“巩固、增强、提升、畅通”八字方针

TT: We must completely put the four principles into effect: “consolidate economic achievements, enhance the vitality of the microcosmic subject, promote industrial chain and smooth national economic cycle”

Analysis: “巩固、增强、提升、畅通” are abbreviated phrases for the policy of economic system reform. In the source text, “巩固” means consolidating economic achievements, “增强” refers to enhancing the vitality of the microcosmic subject, “提升” stands for promoting industrial chain and “畅通” refers to smoothing national economic cycle. Foreign readers can not understand the translation without any explanations. Thus translator uses literal translation plus the annotations to express the accurate information. In addition, the expression “八字方针” refers specifically to the Chinese eight words “巩固、增强、提升、畅通”, while in English, there are far more than eight words. Therefore, the translator modifies and translates them into the “four principles”, so as to make the translation fit communicative Eco-environment.

Example 12:按照“拆、改、提、留、建”的思路,继续推进旧城区改造,稳步推进 27278 套棚户区改造;

TT: Under the five principles of demolition of illegal buildings, renovation of infrastructure, promotion of life quality, preservation of traditional architecture and establishment of long-term mechanism, we will enhance the reconstruction of old city and renovation of 27,278 shantytowns;

Analysis: The expression “拆、改、提、留、建” is an abbreviation of the old city reconstruction plan, which was put forward by Nanchang government. The “拆” means the demolition of illegal buildings, “改” refers to the renovation of infrastructure, “提” stands for the promotion of life quality, “留” means the preservation of traditional cultural architecture and “建” refers to the establishment of long-term mechanism. In external publicity translation, the translator should pay attention to the accuracy of information in translation. The abbreviation “拆、改、提、留、建” cannot convey a complete information to the target readers. Therefore, the translator adopts literal translation plus the annotations to ensure the accuracy of translation from communicative dimension.

Example 13:使城市的“一路、一街、一景、一亭、一园”都彰显历史记忆、延续历史文脉。

TT: and strive to make every corner of the city show its historical memory and continue its historical tradition.

Analysis: The sentence “一路、一街、一景、一亭、一园” in the original text expresses the cultural details of Nanchang through the five scenes listed. This is a kind of Chinese writing technique called sketching to highlights the theme, which is generally used in literature. All the five scenes are used to highlight the intended meaning, the city’s corners. According to the Eco-translatology, in order to achieve the purpose of communication, the author adopts free translation to render the “一路、一街、一景、一亭、一园” into “every corner of the city”.

Example 14:重点推进黑臭水体长治久清、“300 米见绿, 500 米见园”系统建设

TT: we will work to promote the treatment of black and odorous water and the construction of urban green space.

Analysis: In the original text, “300 米见绿, 500 米见园” is one of the goals of urban construction, which was put forward by Ministry of Nanchang Housing and Urban-Rural Development. The expression is not intended to highlight the standard of 300-meter or 500-meter, but to emphasize the coverage of park green space. The translator adopts free translation to render it into “urban green space”, so as to make target readers understand its meaning for the purpose of communication.

5. Conclusion

Based on the Chinese-English translation practice of the RWNMG, this paper studies the translation of the culture-specific expressions in the text of the RWNMG and makes an analysis of the translation practice under the guidance of Eco-translatology. Meanwhile, this paper mainly solves two problems. One is what the classification of the culture-specific expressions in RWNMG is; the second is what translation methods are available for the English translation of culture-specific expressions, which is also the major problem and difficulty in the translation practice.

In view of the above two issues, the author first makes a detailed study of the language characteristics of the RWNMG. The overall style of this text is formal, and it contains many expressions with Chinese characteristics. These culture-specific expressions can be roughly divided into the following categories: the lexical features, syntactic features and rhetorical features. Under the guidance of Eco-translatology, the author adopts a variety of translation methods and techniques in the translation, such as literal translation, literal translation plus annotations, free translation to make the translation conform to the Eco-environment of the target language.

The completion of this translation practice can not only prove that Eco-translatology can provide powerful theoretical guidance for the translation of culture-specific expressions in RWNMG, but also convey its cultural connotation through the translation of culture-specific expressions, promote a good international image of China, and enable target readers to better understand Chinese culture.

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