

A Study on the Strategies of English Translation of Qingdao Folk Culture under the Guidance of Skopos Theory

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Abstract: With the implementation of China's national strategy of "Culture Going-out", it is important to translate Qingdao folk culture well in order to promote the effective communication of Qingdao folk culture worldwide. However, the uniqueness of folk culture poses certain difficulties for translation. Skopos theory can effectively guide the translation of Qingdao folk culture. From the perspective of this theory, the author analyzes the principles and strategies of English translation of Qingdao folk culture and proposes four translation methods, such as literal translation with notes, equivalent translation, phonetic translation with notes and free translation. Translators can choose the appropriate translation methods according to specific translation purposes.

Keywords: Skopos Theory; Qingdao Folk Culture; Translation Strategy

1. Introduction

Folk culture generally refers to the customs and habits created, shared and inherited by the people living in a country, nation and region. As the quintessence of national culture, folk culture is an intangible cultural heritage that needs to be handed down from generation to generation. Under the "going out" strategy of Chinese culture, if we want to make Qingdao folk culture go abroad better, the key point is to translate Qingdao folk culture properly. The author discusses the English translation strategies of Qingdao folk culture from the perspective of Skopos theory.

2. Difficulties in English Translation of Qingdao Folk Culture

2.1 Differences in lexical meanings between English and Chinese

The difference in lexical meaning is one of the main differences between Chinese and English. Translators often fail to find the words that can depict the meaning accurately, which leads to ambiguity in the translation process. For example, in English, both wage and salary mean money we get from work, but the former is the wages of manual workers, while the latter expresses the salary of mental workers. Therefore, the translator needs to choose words reasonably according to the actual situation.

2.2 Differences in syntactic structures between English and Chinese

There are differences in thinking patterns between China and the West, leading to great differences in syntactic structures between Chinese and English. It is manifested in English syntax with parataxis and tree structure, while Chinese syntax with parataxis and linear structure. Therefore, translators should be well aware of this differences and adopt appropriate syntactic structures in Chinese-English translation.

2.3 Differences between Chinese and Western cultural backgrounds

Language is not only a way of expression and communication, but also has a very strong cultural brand. Different languages carry the history and culture of different countries and nations, but the huge cultural differences between China and the West bring great difficulties to translation. For example, in China, dragon is the totem of the Chinese nation, meaning sacred and auspicious, while a symbol of evil in the west.

2.4 Lexical vacancies

In Chinese-English translation, many Chinese words can not find the corresponding meaning words in English, which adds some difficulties to Chinese-English translation. In particular, there are many lexical gaps in Qingdao folk culture. When translating these words, the translator should choose appropriate translation methods to express them based on the understanding the background and extended meaning of these words, and make the translation understood by the readers in order to accurately and effectively convey the connotation of Qingdao folk culture to readers.

3. A Brief Introduction to Skopos Theory

According to Skopos theory, translation is defined as “a communicative act with intention and purpose”, and emphasizes the function of the target text, pointing out that the decisive element influencing the translation process turns out to be the purpose of translation. In translation, the translator pays attention to the purpose and readers of the translation, taking the expected function to be realized as the main reference. Skopos theory proposes that translators should choose translation strategies purposefully based on the expected functions of the target text. Skopos theory advocates three important translation principles, the Skopos principle, the coherence principle and the faithfulness principle, respectively. According to the three principles of Skopos theory, Hans Vermeer believes that Skopos principle is the highest principle in translation, while coherence principle and loyalty principle should be subordinated to Skopos principle^[1]. Nord puts forward “function plus loyalty”, pointing out that the choice, adjustment or rewriting of language and language form in the source language depends on the purpose of translation^[2]. Therefore, according to the Skopos theory, the translator should first clarify the purpose of translation, and then use the corresponding translation strategies and methods according to the purpose of translation.

4. Principles of English Translation of Qingdao Folk Culture Based on Skopos Theory

4.1 Accurately conveying the information of folk culture and reproducing the original appearance of folk culture

The purpose of folk culture translation is to let the target readers understand the Chinese folk culture, effectively spread and carry forward the Chinese culture, and promote the Chinese folk culture to go abroad better^[3]. Therefore, a principle that must be followed is to accurately convey the information of folk culture and present the original appearance of folk culture to the target readers.

4.2 Supplementing relevant cultural background knowledge and avoiding cultural conflicts as far as possible

In view of the lexical vacancy and cultural deficiency in the translation of folk culture, the translator can adopt the method of additional translation to supplement the cultural background information and historical origin behind the vocabulary, which is helpful for the target readers to have a comprehensive understanding of folk culture. As for the phenomenon of semantic inequality, we can utilize the method of annotation to annotate the relevant cultural connotations and meanings, so as to avoid misunderstandings and even cultural conflicts caused by different cultural backgrounds.

5. English Translation Strategies of Qingdao Folk Culture based on Skopos Theory

5.1 High level of Chinese and Western cultural literacy for translators

Different from other stylistic translation, the translation of folk culture requires not only a solid foundation in spoken and written language, but also a very high level of cultural literacy in China and the West^[4]. First of all, the translator needs to have a strong interest in and in-depth understanding of folk culture, constantly search for materials in the process of translation, and then start translation after clarifying the corresponding Chinese and Western cultural background. At the same time, translators should try their best to avoid the interference of the original text and reproduce Chinese folk culture in a way that the translator can understand and accept easily. In addition, translators should continue to learn, consolidate the basic knowledge of translation theory, enrich their own

translation theories and translation methods, and be able to flexibly use different methods to accurately translate folk culture.

5.2 English translation method of Qingdao folk culture based on Skopos theory

5.2.1 Literal translation with notes

The literal translation method requires the translation to be as faithful as possible to the source text, so it can retain the content and language form of the source text to the maximum extent and reproduce the cultural characteristics of the source language to the reader. Many folk words in Chinese are translated literally, such as “Spring Festival” and “paper tiger”. However, many literal English words only stay in the information transformation of the surface meaning and can not reflect the cultural connotations behind them. Objectively speaking, the annotation method can introduce the relevant contents of the cultural background and make the translation vivid and easy to understand^[5].

5.2.2 Equivalent translation

The connotations expressed in Chinese can find the same or similar expressions in western culture, like proverbs and idioms. If the figurative meanings of Chinese and English are similar or the same, then the translator can abandon the literal images of Chinese idioms and use the equivalent translation method to carry out translation. This method can convey the meaning of the original text through expressions familiar to the target reader. For example, “You can’t make bricks without straw.”

5.2.3 Transliteration plus notes

This translation method is suitable for words whose meanings are not completely equivalent in the target language. For example, some place names and culture-loaded words with Chinese characteristics have strong national characteristics, and transliteration should be adopted in translation in order to retain their national characteristics. In view of the cultural deficiencies and lexical gaps in the English translation of Qingdao folk culture, transliteration can retain the pronunciation of the source language, but it will bring some difficulties to the readers. With the help of annotations, the cultural connotations in transliteration can be explained in detail, which is convenient for readers to fully understand the linguistic and cultural connotations after transliteration. For example, the word “steamed bread” is translated into “Mantou” by transliteration, and notes such as “steamed bun” are added to introduce and explain the practice and form of steamed bread.

5.2.4 Free translation

Sometimes direct translation according to the literal meaning will bring confusion and misunderstanding to the target readers, so the free translation method can be adopted to convey the most essential and core of the source text in the language form familiar to the target readers. Although free translation will abandon the language form and cultural characteristics of the source language to a certain extent, it will help the target readers to quickly and accurately understand its word orientation and cultural core. For example, women who get pregnant will say “Youxi”. If literal translation is adopted and “Youxi” is translated into “getting happiness”, it won’t directly associate the target reader with a woman’s pregnancy.

5.3 Continuously improving the translation according to the feedback of the target readers

Skopos theory emphasizes that translation should achieve the desired purpose, and a key reference for the achievement of the intended purpose is the feedback of the target readers. If the translator can get in touch with the representative target readers, have a dialogue with the readers after reading, and understand the target readers’ understanding and acceptance of the translation, it will help the translator to adjust the translation methods and further improve the translation.

6. Conclusion

During the translation of Qingdao folk culture, we should take the promotion and dissemination of folk culture as the starting point, on the basis of preserving the original characteristics, comprehensively consider the readability of the translation and the receptive ability of the audience, and elaborate on the cultural background and other knowledge. It is considered that in-depth exploration of the historical origin and cultural background of folk culture and flexible use of translation methods can effectively spread Qingdao folk culture in western countries.

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