

Study on Translation of Culture-loaded Words in Landscape Culture

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Abstract: The culture-loaded words are a special vocabulary of all kinds of language. And its translation has been one of the most difficult problems in the academic field. When culture-loaded words are being translated from the source language into the target language, the translator should have a clear knowledge of the differences in understanding the same culture-loaded word of both the source language reader and the target language reader. This paper deals with strategies for optimizing the translation of culture-loaded words, especially translating Chinese culture-loaded words into English. Alienation translation favors communicating the characteristics and connotation of Chinese and English culture.

Keywords: Culture-Loaded Words; Landscape Culture; Cultural Connotations; Translation Equivalence

1. Introduction

Culture-loaded words are words that carry a strong cultural connotation or meaning that may not be easily understood by those who are not familiar with the culture. These words are often specific to a particular language or cultural group and may reflect the values, beliefs, and customs of that group. Culture-loaded words, also known as lexical gaps, refer to the fact that the cultural information contained in the words of the source language cannot be found in the target language. Therefore, the translation of culture-loaded words is also a big difficulty for translators in the translation of literary works. The translation of culture-loaded words can directly reflect the translation level of the whole work.

There is some current academic research on Chinese landscape culture, covering a range of topics including history, literature, art, philosophy, and environmental studies. But at present, there are few researches on landscape culture in domestic translation, and almost no papers on culture-loaded words related to landscape culture.

This paper fully explores the uniqueness of landscape and scenery, dividing the main body of its culture-loaded words into four categories, which are landscape culture-loaded words, custom and geography culture-loaded words, national culture-loaded words and material culture-loaded words. In view of the landscape characteristics of the Great View of Chinese Landscape Culture, this paper deliberately selected culture-loaded words to improve the translation vacancy of landscape culture-loaded words, so as to make the translation of landscape culture more perfect.

2.1 Landscape culture-loaded words

One example of a culturally-loaded landscape-related word in Chinese is the phrase “天池” (tiān chí), which literally translates to “heavenly lake.” In Chinese culture, “天池” refers to a natural lake or pond that is located in a mountainous area and is considered to be an extraordinary place of beauty and spiritual significance. The phrase is often used in poetry and literature to evoke a sense of awe and wonder at the natural world.

To translate “天池” into English, a translation that captures the spiritual and poetic dimensions of the phrase could be “a majestic mountain lake that inspires both awe and wonder.” This translation conveys the beauty and spiritual significance of “天池” in a way that is accessible to English-speaking audiences while also staying true to the cultural significance of the term in Chinese culture.

Another Chinese words like “禅林” (chán lín) in the context of landscape are also culturally-loaded and carry deep historical and spiritual significance. “禅林” refers to a forest or grove that is associated with Zen Buddhism, and often serves as a place for meditation and contemplation.

To translate “禅林” into English, a translation that captures both the religious and natural elements of the term could be “Zen forest” or “meditative grove.” These translations evoke the sense of a serene and tranquil natural setting that is imbued with the spiritual essence of Zen Buddhism.

As with other culturally-loaded landscape-related words in Chinese, translating “禅林” requires an understanding of the social and cultural context in which the word is used, as well as an appreciation for the deeper meanings and connotations that are embedded in the term.

In general, translating culturally-loaded landscape-related words in Chinese requires a nuanced understanding of the social and cultural context in which the words are used, as well as a sensitivity to the deeper meanings and connotations that are embedded in those words.

2.2 Custom and geography culture-loaded words

Chinese words like “高跷会” (gāo qiāo huì) in the context of landscape are also culturally-loaded and carry deep historical and traditional significance. “高跷会” refers to a traditional performance art form that involves stilt-walking, acrobatics, and martial arts, often performed during festive occasions and celebrations in southern China. To translate “高跷会” into English, a translation that captures the festive and performance-oriented elements of the term could be “Stilt-walking Festival” or “Acrobatic Celebration.” These translations convey the sense of a lively and dynamic performance tradition that is steeped in the cultural traditions of southern China.

As with other culturally-loaded landscape-related words in Chinese, translating “高跷会” requires an understanding of the historical and cultural context in which the term is used, as well as an appreciation for the artistic and performance elements that are inherent in the term.

Chinese words like “华盖宝辇会” (huá gài bǎo niǎn huì) in the context of landscape are also culturally-loaded and steeped in history. “华盖宝辇会” is an ancient ceremonial procession that was used to symbolize the emperor’s power during the Tang dynasty in China. The term refers to a grand and opulent procession that featured a decorated carriage, the “宝辇” (bǎo niǎn), which was topped with a “华盖” (huá gài) or ornate canopy, and was used to transport the emperor during important state ceremonies. To translate “华盖宝辇会” into English, a translation that conveys the grandeur and opulence of the procession may be appropriate, such as “Royal Carriage Procession” or “Imperial Canopied Parade.” These translations help capture the sense of the emperor’s grandeur and power, as well as the opulence and beauty of the procession itself.

As with other culturally-loaded landscape-related words in Chinese, translating “华盖宝辇会” requires an understanding of the history and cultural context in which the term is used, as well as an appreciation for the artistic and ceremonial elements that are inherent in the term.

渤海国 (Bó Hǎi Guó) was an ancient kingdom located in present-day northeast China, with a rich history and culture that have influenced the region for centuries. When translating culturally-loaded landscape-related words like 渤海国, it is important to preserve the historical and cultural significance of the term. One possible English translation of 渤海国 is “Bohai Kingdom.” This translation maintains the original sound and meaning of the Chinese characters, while also conveying the idea of a sovereign state with a long and storied past.

Other possible translations could emphasize different aspects of the kingdom, such as its location or its cultural contributions. For example, “Bohai State” or “State of Bohai” could highlight the political nature of the kingdom, while “Bohai Culture” or “Culture of Bohai” could emphasize its cultural influence.

Regardless of the specific translation, it is important to convey the depth and richness of the historical and cultural context in which 渤海国 is used, and to treat the term with the respect and appreciation it deserves.

2.3 Ethnical culture-loaded words

The cultural connotations of different ethnic groups have different language systems and expressions, and culture-loaded words best reflect the cultural information carried by language. China, in particular, is a country with 56 ethnic groups, each with its own unique culture-loaded words. In the excerpts we translated, many culture-loaded words unique to ethnic minorities appear.

For example, “鄂伦春族”(the Oroqen) are an ethnic group in northeast China, whose name means “people who live on mountains” (“reindeer people “). In the case of transliteration, the cultural connotation carried by the name will be lost. It is not only difficult for readers to understand the profound connotation of the text, but also makes the text lose the value of cultural communication.

“京旗苏拉”(Jingqi Sura), a culture-loaded word of Manchu, means idle population. Jingqi Sura, a culture-loaded word of Manchu, means idle population. But even if the language of Manchu and Han later converged, the cultural differences of different lexical loads were still difficult to erase.

In addition to the ethnic minorities, the Han people are also a great source of culture-loaded words. For example, in the development of feudal dynasties in China, the term “龙兴之地” gradually developed. Normally, “龙” in China means “Auspicious dragon” and “兴” means to rise and prosper. Thus, the superficial meaning is the place where the dragon began to rise, but in fact, “龙” here refers to the founding emperor or dynasty. “龙兴之地” means the place where a dynasty or the founding emperor of the dynasty was born or raised, according to the cultural connotation of dragon developed over thousands of years.

2.4 Material culture-loaded words

Material culture-loaded words refer to social material production activities and their specific products, mainly referring to those tangible and visible words of cultural inheritance such as clothing, diet, residence, and transportation in People’s Daily life. These types of words reflect the characteristics of material culture created by people within a certain linguistic and cultural group.

For example, “饭碗”(rice bowl) in China is a vivid term for subsistence skills and jobs, not just the eating bowl. There are many similar words that are also expressed through some rhetorical devices, presenting complex connotations through simple material nouns.

The surface meaning of “衙门” is the door of a government office, but actually, it refers to one of the government agencies in ancient China that exercised functions such as investigation and trial, and so on.

“麻将” is an instrument of a kind of leisure activity, but in China it actually refers to the corresponding leisure activity of this instrument.

“庚帖” or translated as “marriage card”. In the old days of China, under the constraints of feudal ideology, men and women did not meet directly for marriage, but were selected by their parents through matchmakers. After the blind date, if both parties agreed, they would exchange “庚帖”, which was a red card with the names, birthplaces, birthdates, and three generations of ancestors. This “庚帖” is like a proof that a man is willing to marry and a woman is willing to marry. The two parties exchanged “庚帖” to express their proposal or engagement. Thus, “庚帖” or “marriage card” is of great importance in ancient China.

These words can only be understood by people in the same cultural context. Therefore, the translation method of these culturally loaded words is crucial in the process of translating literary works into English.

3. How to deal with culturally-loaded words

When dealing with culturally-loaded words in English translation of Chinese works, it is important to consider the historical and cultural significance of the term in its original context. Here are some steps to follow:

1. Understand the cultural context: The first step is to understand the cultural context of the Chinese term. This includes researching the historical, social, and cultural background of the term and its usage.

2. Find an equivalent English term: Look for an equivalent English term that conveys similar nuances and associations as the Chinese term. This may involve using synonyms or idiomatic expressions.

3. Consider the target audience: Consider the target audience of the translation. If the translation is intended for a general readership, it may be necessary to provide additional context or explanatory notes.

4. Stay true to the original text: It is important to stay true to the original text and meaning of the culturally-loaded word while still ensuring that it is understandable and culturally appropriate for the English-speaking audience.

5. Use consistent terminology: Consistency is key when translating culturally-loaded terms. Use consistent terminology throughout the

translation to maintain clarity and coherence.

6. When translating culture-loaded words contained in literary works, translators can adopt the method of free translation and annotation, so as to effectively reflect the characteristics of the original works. In addition, when translating relatively abstract concepts or words in professional fields, translators should also make annotations to facilitate readers' understanding, so as to prevent readers' understanding errors caused by social and cultural differences. In many literary works, some words have specific meanings in specific cultures and scenes, and annotation is an effective way to avoid ambiguity.

7. There are different religious backgrounds in China and the West. Based on these different religious backgrounds, translators should also make corresponding transformations in the translation process and pay attention to religious differences in translation. Especially for some religious culture-loaded words, translators need to combine the religious cultural background, symbolic meaning and emotional color to translate them and restore the true meaning in the original text.

For some material culture-loaded words, translators should also pay attention to the equivalence of Chinese and western materials. In case of material inequality, translators should pay attention to the corresponding transformation of material culture-loaded words in material translation based on cultural and social background rather than direct translation. By comparing the material culture differences between the source language country and the target language country, the translation of material culture-loaded words is carried out from the perspective of readers' comprehensibility.

By following these steps, translators can effectively convey the meaning and cultural significance of Chinese culturally-loaded words in English translations, while respecting their original context and keeping their meaning intact.

4. Conclusion

Landscape culture loaded words are terms or phrases in Chinese language that contain rich cultural and historical connotations related to various aspects of landscape, such as geography, topography, nature, architecture, and art. These words often convey a deep and complex understanding of the relationship between humans and the natural world, and reflect the cultural and aesthetic values of traditional Chinese landscape culture.

Unlike standard language or technical terms, landscape culture loaded words have a unique connotation and aesthetic appeal in Chinese culture that may be difficult to fully capture in other languages. Thus, it is important for translators to carefully consider the cultural significance of these words and to find appropriate equivalents in the target language that convey the same nuances and associations. Only with a thorough understanding of the cultural context and significance of these words can they be translated effectively.

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