

Impact of Culture on Genshin Impact Game Texts Translation

Jingyu Liu*

School of Foreign Languages, Tianjin University, Tianjin, China

* Corresponding Author Email: ljy0518_@tju.edu.cn

Abstract. In recent years, the video game market has developed at a very fast speed. More and more games are going international and have become an important way of cultural exchange. For a game to enter the international market, translation is essential. Given the cultural differences between the work and the audience, translators need to make appropriate negotiations and compromises when translating the local cultural content contained in the game. A good translation can even expand the audience of the game, so as to increase the sales of the place and spread the content with regional, national and ethnic characteristics of the game, so that more non-national players can learn and understand different social cultures while playing the game. Genshin Impact is a Chinese game that does a very good job at translating. This paper analyzes the relevant translations in Genshin Impact using literature, food and toponymy to clarify the characteristics of Chinese game subtitle translation and the advantages and disadvantages of the translation. Therefore, game translation can be improved, and cultural exchange activities can be more easily for people to take part in.

Keywords: Genshin Impact; Translation; Literature; Food culture; Toponymy.

1. Introduction

In today's world, the popularity of the Internet and the advancement of science and technology have made entertainment a way of cross-culture communication activity. So, games, a widely chosen way of relaxing and even a career for the young generations, have played an important role in cross-culture communication. Therefore, the translation of game texts has become a part of cultural exchange activities.

1.1. Introduction to Genshin Impact

Genshin Impact is an open-world adventure role-playing game published by Mihoyo Technology (Shanghai) Co., Ltd. This online game builds an open world called Teyvat, and tells the story of the Traveler (the code name of the character controlled by the player in the game) traveling through the Seven Kingdoms to find his or her relatives, and in the process, he or she makes many friends and encounters various events. Although the world of Genshin Impact is made up, there are realistic references in many aspects such as the game background, storyline and map design. The regions that have been opened so far are based on medieval Europe (蒙德Mondstadt), ancient China (璃月Liyue), Japan (稻妻 Inazuma), Egypt and Indian (须弥Sumeru) civilizations.

1.2. Influence on Translation Caused by Socio-culture

The translation is an activity that is the process of converting a native language into a target language. The English-Chinese translation activity is not only the process of converting the characters of two languages, but also the process of converting two different cultural characteristics. The information carried by the language reflects the cultural context and social factors of different languages, and this activity is influenced not only by cultural factors but also by various social factors in the translation process [1]. The influence of society and culture on translation is not only about material life, but also about historical and ideological elements. This paper will select the translation from Liyue in Genshin Impact and analyze from three aspects: Chinese literature, Chinese food culture and Chinese toponymy, to study the influence of social culture on the translation of game texts.

2. Chinese Literature

Chinese is one of the oldest languages in the world. If literature is the art of language, then Chinese and its characters as symbols of Chinese have a more obvious and unique expressive ability. And literature is an important product of the civilization of human being known for their social history [2]. The reason why Chinese literature has this characteristic today is closely related to the characteristics of the Chinese language. Chinese is formed by ideographic characters. Each of the characters has its own meaning and can be combined in a very flexible way.

2.1. Characteristics of Chinese Literature

In addition to the stability and unity formed by society and history, Chinese literature also incorporates linguistic features of Chinese, unique ethic and inner philosophy, which are completely different from other literature. This has led to the following major characteristics of Chinese literature: a. images that the sentences or words provide can be easily evoked by the readers; b. a unique syllabic variation and formal beauty can be found in each passage, especially in Chinese poetry; c. a special written language, a classical style of writing called “文言文”, also called classical Chinese.

2.2. The Influence of Chinese Characteristics on the Translation of Game Texts

The biggest influence is based on the features of the Chinese. If literature is the art of language, then Chinese and its characters as symbols of Chinese have a more obvious and unique expressive ability. The reason why Chinese literature has this characteristic today is closely related to the characteristics of the Chinese language. Chinese is formed by ideographic characters and each of the characters has its own meaning and can be combined in a very flexible way.

Classical Chinese, which has a special sense of history and culture with Chinese characteristics, contains the unique phenomenon of the separation of language and text [3]. Several cases from Genshin Impact show that Chinese literary features can bring challenges and implications to the translation of the text. Since Chinese characters are generally monogrammatic and monographic. One character and one sound, the syllabic changes in Chinese poetry have a set of unique rules, and create a neat and symmetrical formal beauty in appearance. For example, the translation of the constellations, especially the characters from Liyue like Hu Tao, Zhong Li, Yelan, etc. Liyue is a region designed with Chinese culture, so the characters from there usually have poetry-like constellations' names such as “悬星尽散击云碎，璇玑合璧镇昆仑 (Piercing Fragments, Shock Effect)” or “无可奈何燃花作香，幽蝶能留一缕芳 (Floral Incense, Butterfly's Embrace)”. Also, the translation to the four sentences meter “劳人思妇，神仙精鬼，率真言情，纸映成戏” is “A man's melancholic yearning, adepti and demons, and a heartfelt romance played out with paper” do make the player understand this is a shadow show. However, it cannot antithesis neatly like Chinese, and in a certain event linked to the Chinese New Year, this translation cannot bring the connotation to the plays.

Ancient Chinese poetry can be said to be the most rigorous grammatical poem in the world. These translations mostly chose to translate directly the literal meaning or translate the inner meaning. But both ways abandon the beauty and the phonology of Chinese literature. These are the most efficient way to make the players understand. However, it will cause a lack of cultural connotation or an acosmia feeling among players. Like Shenhe's constellations, the names of the six levels are “心斋 (Clarity of Heart)” “定蒙 (Centered Spirit)” “潜虚 (Seclusion)” “洞观 (Insight)” “化神 (Divine Attainment)” and “忘玄 (Mystical Abandon)”. These six Chinese words contain the culture of Chinese Immortal Stories and show the personal character of Shenhe—a child raised up by Cloud Retainer (借风流云真君), a little bit like an orphan who grow up in a Taoist Abbey. It is nearly impossible to put holy and pure feelings into the translation.

3. Chinese Food Culture

Cultural differences are mainly caused by differences in climate and environment, and lifestyle. China has a long history of food culture, due to the long history and the existence of regional diversity [4]. China is an Asian country and most of the land is in the temperate region which is very suitable for a crop to grow. This has also led to the diversification of vegetarian-related dishes in China's food culture [5]. In Western European countries, most areas are more oceanic climates, which are more suitable for the development of fishing and animal husbandry, so their diet is mainly meat. Chinese food culture is broad and profound, whether, in terms of dishes, production, and efficacy, it can be said that there are many varieties. In particular, China also advocates "food supplements", so Chinese food culture also has its own development characteristics. The terms related to Chinese food culture are rich and diverse, especially the names of local cuisines are varied. Many of the names are mixed with regional dialects, which adds a lot of difficulty to the external dissemination of Chinese food culture.

3.1. Characteristics of Chinese Food Culture and Dish Names Translation

China's food and cooking culture has a long history and is favored by friends at home and abroad. "Food is a cultural phenomenon, it has cultural commonalities" [6]. Language and its translation, as a bridge between cultures, play an indispensable role in today's era of increasingly frequent cultural exchanges. "Chinese food culture plays an increasingly important role in Sino-foreign exchanges, which puts forward higher requirements for the English translation of Chinese cuisine." The translation of Chinese dishes should take into account the ingredients and cooking techniques that China does not use. Some Chinese dish names also have connotations such as historical figures, historical events, legends and allusions, and some express the meaning of people's pursuit of auspicious happiness [7].

3.2. The Influence of Chinese Food Culture on Game Text Translation

In the process of translation, translators should pay attention to the differences in food culture caused by differences in climate and environment. Besides, they need to understand the language and the culture behind different countries, in order to improve cross-cultural communication skills.

Chinese food culture is rich in variety. After all, in ancient China, there was a saying that "the people take food as the sky". Chinese people pay special attention to food, and there are special snacks and famous cuisines in all parts of the province, common Cantonese cuisine, Sichuan cuisine, and so on. This is related to China's economy and culture, because China has always been a big agricultural country, producing a lot of cuisines [8]. It is also known for its complexity and refinement. In Genshin Impact, there are over 130 dishes many of which are based on Chinese dishes. Chinese dishes sometimes are named by their meaning or allusion. A certain name links to a certain dish in a certain cuisine of a certain region, and this dish has a certain flavor for the people from this region. For example, "松鼠鱼 (Squirrel Fish)" and "莲花酥 (Lotus Flower Crisp)" are from Jiangsu cuisine, "龙须面 (Dragon Beard Noodles)" is from Shandong cuisine, and "水煮鱼 (Boiled Fish)" is from Sichuan cuisine. These four dishes can be found both in the real world and in the game, and the translation is translated directly from the Chinese dish names.

However, "仙跳墙 (Adeptus' Temptation)" in Genshin Impact cannot be translated directly. In the real world, there is a dish called "Buddha jumped over the wall (佛跳墙)", but people who never heard about this will be confused by the name, so the translator of Genshin Impact decided to translate the dish into another way. This translation contains the story of how the dish's name comes.

In addition, China also has a unique way of cooking dishes, which ensures that the dishes can be authentic, especially paying attention to "color, aroma and taste". Therefore, when translating the name of the dish, there must also be a certain process involved, especially when introducing the dish. Only in this way can people better comment on traditional dishes, and constantly improve people's recognition of food culture in this process. Take "文火慢炖腌笃鲜 (Slow-cooked bamboo Shoot

soup)” “爆炒肉片 (Stir-Fried Filet)” and “炆炒肉片 (Flash-Fried Filet)” as examples, the translation put how these dishes are cooked in and make the players knowing the difference between them. This kind of translation is one of the most difficult ones, because the translators are likely to use the wrong words. The translators themselves should know exactly about these ways of cooking. “Slow-cooked bamboo Shoot soup” cannot use “slow-braise” or “slow-stew” to replace “slow-cooked”. “Braise” has less liquid in the pot and large pieces of meat and needs to cook separately; “stew” has small pieces of several similar foods and the liquid needs to completely cover the food and slowly cook them together. But for the dish “Bamboo shoot soup”, there are differences between both “braise” and “stew”, and it has different food cooked together in a pot with slowly boiled water for at least an hour.

What’s more, the translation of the dish “中原杂碎 (Zhongyuan Chop Suey)” combine with the translation of “chop suey”. The translation of “Chop Suey(杂碎)” borrowed the Chinese Cantonese pronunciation of “杂碎”, and omit the verb “chow(炒)”. But there isn’t also something people can find in English that can explain what the food is. “鸡豆花 (Chicken Tofu Pudding)” is a typical one. Pudding and “豆花” are totally different, they may look very similar but they are made from different sources and have different tastes, so the translation “Chicken Tofu Pudding” is somewhat inaccurate. Therefore, in the process of translating the dishes, people must combine the traditional Chinese food culture to carry out corresponding analyses.

4. Chinese Toponymy

Place names are symbols for various geographical entities, usually expressed in written language [9]. According to the order of human understanding, human beings first contact and gradually recognize and identify specific geographical entities. With the continuous expansion of life, human observation and understanding of more geographical entities have led to the recognition of individual differences in specific geographical entities and regional overall differences. It is also the name given to a place on the surface by people in order to identify the surrounding environment in mutual communication, which can reflect the properties, geomorphological characteristics, social customs, economy, historical culture and changes and religious beliefs of a certain region, a certain ethnic group, and a certain historical era. The English translation of place names is not a simple process of converting from Chinese to English, but a way to transmit cultural connotations.

4.1. Characteristics of Chinese Geographical Names

The first feature of Chinese geographical names is their strong ability to cover culture. Many place names in China are related to the history and culture of the region. The second feature is that it is regional indicative, such as the inclusion of "east, west, south and north" and other symbols. The third feature is that it can highlight the geographical nature of each place, such as “Kulangsu Island (鼓浪屿)”, also known as “Qin Island (琴岛)”. The fourth feature is that it has the characteristics of Chinese literature [10].

4.2. The Influence of Chinese Geographical Name Characteristics on the English Translation of Geographical Names in Liyue Area of Genshin Impact

Liyue is a region created with China's geographical and cultural characteristics, and its place names are mostly Chinese-style, which also makes its place name translation refer to the translation of China’s geographical names. The method of combining transliteration and paraphrasing is the main way to do the translation, sometimes also use paraphrasing, or use additional translation and explanations. For example, “珉林 (Minlin)” and “南天门 (Nantianmen)” use transliteration, writing pinyin directly can better retain its regional cultural characteristics. It is difficult to express the cultural and historical background behind this region. Because Chinese Pinyin is only a phonetic tool for Chinese, not a Chinese of characters, this translation method is not referred to the character patterns,

but a transliteration method with Chinese features. The names with the historical background of the game story is better to use free translation than transliteration. It is better for the player to understand the story behind the name of the area by playing the game than to try to translate it. The translations of “采樵谷 (Lumberpick Valley)”, “琉璃峰 (Glaze Peak)” and “丹砂崖 (Cinnabar Cliff)”, which have no inner meaning, but only illustrate the occupation of the residents and the property in the area. These are completely literal translations, and people can directly find the corresponding expressions in English. The translation of “华光林(Huaguang Stone Forest)” adds “stone” as an explanation based on a combination of transliteration and paraphrasing, because this is not a real forest, but a stone forest landform. Throughout the Liyue region, the most common translation method is a combination of transliteration and paraphrasing. There are many place names with Chinese characteristics that use “proper names + common names” forms, such as “轻策庄(Qingce Village)”, “明蕴镇(Mingyun Village)”, “庆云顶(Qingyun Peal)”, “绝云间(Jueyun Karst)” and “狄花洲(Dihua Marsh)”. At this time, it is necessary to use Pinyin to transliterate the proper name part, and the common name part is translated according to the specific connotation of the place name. It is relatively easy for both “庄” and “镇” to have the meaning of "village". Similarly, “瑶光滩(Yaoguang Shoal)” and “无妄坡(Wuwang Hill)” are also relatively simple, that is, the proper name transliteration plus “浅滩(Shoal)” and “山坡(Hill)” corresponding English expressions. However, the common names “顶”, “间” and “洲” in 庆云顶(Qingyun Peal)”, “绝云间(Jueyun Karst)” and “狄花洲(Dihua Marsh)” need to be translated in combination with geographical terrain, so the players can understand.

5. Conclusion

Although the translation in Genshin Impact has been very good, there are still shortcomings, such as the translation of dish names. The translation of characteristic dishes is inaccurate, such as “豆花” translated into “pudding”. “豆花” has a sweet and salty difference, but pudding in most appears as a dessert. Also, the production method, material, and taste are also different, simply in shape translation is not appropriate. Many translations containing Chinese cooking techniques have found English expressions that match the heat and other aspects, but in Chinese cuisine, the same heat and oil amount are completely two cooking methods in the hands of chefs in different cuisines. In addition, for sentences with cultural and literary colors and connotations, the translation of words is as much as possible to retain cultural characteristics while allowing players to understand, but in the process of translation, some characteristic things have to be lost. No matter what kind of translation, it is not possible to fully translate the content of the source language. Language has cultural connotations and is influenced by social history, so words and sentences that can completely replace the content expressed in one language will not be found. However, translation is still evolving, and today, when world communication continues to expand, translation is trying to find a balance, trying to show one cultural identity through another language for more people to understand.

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