

Study on the English Translation of Culture-Loaded Words in the Perspective of Relevance Theory in The Kingdom of Wine

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Abstract: It has gone through a period of development from the theory of relevance to the theory of relevance translation. The embodiment of relevance requires the constant efforts of translators. Cultural loaded words, as vocabulary with specific cultural colors, are not easy to find corresponding expressions in the target culture. This paper takes the English translation of Wine Country by Ge Haowen as a basis to study the translation of culturally loaded words from three dimensions: material culture, linguistic culture and social culture. It is found that Ge Haowen, the translator, greatly preserves the characteristics of the original text in the process of translation, and also endeavors to make the translation achieve contextual proximity, so as to convey the intention of the text to the readers.

Keywords: The Wine Country; Culturally Loaded Words; Association Theory; Ge Haowen.

1. Introduction

"Cultural-loaded words are words, phrases and idioms that signify something specific to a culture. These words reflect the unique ways of activity of a particular people, which have been gradually accumulated over a long period of history and which are different from those of other people." [1] Literary works rich in ethnicity usually contain a large number of culturally loaded words, but due to their specific cultural connotations it is difficult for the translator to realize the complete equivalence between the original text and the translated text.

Wine Country is a book by Mo Yan, a writer from Gaomi, Shandong Province. Since the mid-1980s, he has risen to prominence with a series of local works, full of complex emotions of "nostalgia for the homeland" and "resentment for the homeland", and has been categorized as a writer of "root literature", making bold attempts and innovations in narrative experimentation. In the novel Sakoku, Ding Hooker, a special investigator, is ordered to investigate the crime of cooking babies by local officials in Sakoku City, and in the midst of power, wine, and women, he gets drunk and drowns in a latrine. The English translation of Republic of Wine is by American scholar Howard Goldblatt. Ge Haowen has a deep knowledge of Chinese and English, and has served as the head of the Chinese Department at San Francisco State University, and is now a professor at the University of Colorado in the U.S.A. He is recognized as the chief translator of contemporary Chinese literature, and Professor Ge Haowen has translated Mo Yan's Red Sorghum, Song of the Garlic Carette in Paradise, Forty-One Cannons, Bountiful Breasts and Fat Buttocks, Fatigue of Life and Death, Honkan Torture, The Changes, Frogs, and Transparent Red Carrots, a collection of short stories, Master's Increasing Humor, and works by contemporary Chinese writers such as Lao She, Bajin, Jia Pingwa, and Wang Shuo.

2. Introduction to the Theory of Associative Translation

The development and growth of pragmatics have provided utilizable theoretical support for translation research. Among them, Paul Grice, an American philosopher of language and pragmatist, has made many outstanding contributions to the research of association theory. For example, in "Logic and Conversation" published in 1975, "association" is ranked third among Grice's "principles of cooperation", and communication can only be successfully accomplished if it meets the following four principles: 1) Quantity: the speaker must give enough information; 2) Quality: the speaker must not say what he/she thinks is untrue or lacks sufficient evidence; 3) Relevance: the information must be relevant; 4) Manner: the information must be given in an orderly manner to achieve the purpose of communication.

However, post-Grice studies have questioned Grice's principle of cooperation: 1) whether the principle of cooperation is essential in communication; 2) whether it is the only best principle to explain 3) the incompatibility of the principle of cooperation with maxims; and 4) the lack of a clear and unambiguous descriptive mechanism.

In 1986, Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson refined Relevance Theory on the basis of the pragmatically relevant principles proposed by Grice, which they explained in their co-authored book Relevance: Communication and Cognition. They believe that Relevance Theory is the foundation of Cognitive Pragmatics and put forward the principle of relevance, which answers the questions of how to communicate and what to communicate.

They argue: "Communication is guided by association theory, and the hidden meaning in communicative discourse is a proposition that yields contextual hidden meanings that are maximally informative with minimal processing effort, and that the communicator is expected to process with effort to obtain the hidden meaning from the discourse."

Ernst August Gutt, a student of Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, conducted research on translation based on the theory

of association and wrote *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context*, which proposed the theory of associative translation. *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context*

Gutt (1991) pointed out that translation is a verbal communication act of reasoning on the basis of relevance, so the translated text should be similar to the original text in terms of relevance, and the reader can achieve optimal relevance with minimal reasoning effort (Sperber et al., 2001). Optimal relevance is the principle and criterion of translation research, and it is also the translator's goal, which the translator should try to achieve so that the intention of the author of the original text matches the expectations of the readers of the translated text (Lin Kernan, 1994).

2.1. Literature Review

Domestic research on association theory is like a hundred flowers, Lin Kernan made a detailed introduction and explanation of association theory [1]. Li Yin and Luo Xuanxuan [2] looked at the association theory from the correspondence of levels and the correspondence of relevance. Yan Zhang succinctly explained the associative translation theory and exploratively revealed the main features of associative translation theory [3]. Long Ting [4] starts from the introduction of Paul Grice's principle of pragmatic relevance, and on the basis of interpreting the relevance theories of Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, he explores in a more specific way the aspects of the relevance translation theory that play a guiding role in translation practice. In terms of theoretical application Li Zhanxi puts forward the concept of "associative domain" and defines it as "the cross-cultural region in which the translator's mind operates in the process of translation" [4], and Meng Jianguang discusses the criteria of translation from the perspective of associative theory and proposes that translation as a communicative activity has a significant impact on the principle on which the understanding of the original language and the selection of the code in the translation process are based is the principle of association [5]. Cai Jinbao and Lin Ying proposed that the theory of relevance prompts translators to shift the focus of their thinking from text to cognition [6], and prompts translators to adopt top-down translation strategies. Some scholars even apply the theory to the study of modern and contemporary literature in foreign translation. For example, based on the correlation theory, semi-structured interviews were used to investigate the process and results of source language readers' and translated readers' understanding of five types of culturally loaded words in the original text and the translated text, so as to validate the optimal correlation of the translated text [7]. [8] Comparing and analyzing the representative strategies of translating culturally loaded words, as to the issue of the limitations and applicability of the theory, scholars believe that the correlation theory is at a certain distance from literary translation, and that it cannot provide an effective solution to the phenomenon of cultural defaults in literary translation [9]. Scholars recognize that the correlation theory is of great significance to translation research, but it is wrong to say that "correlation theory can explain all the phenomena of translation".

To summarize, association theory has some explanatory power for translation. Ge Haowen, Mo Yan's "imperial" English translator, thinks: "The Wine Country is probably the most shocking Chinese literary work of this century." [3] (P190) Therefore, this paper discusses the degree of

correlation between the original text and the translated text from the perspective of correlation translation theory, based on the translator's method of translating culturally loaded words.

2.2. Cultural Load Words

American scholar Eugene Nida considers culture-rich words from five aspects: ecological, material, social, religious and linguistic culture. Considering the actual content of the text, the culturally loaded words in the English translation of *Wine Country* are categorized and analyzed in terms of material culture words and linguistic culture words. The following fragments from *Wine Country* are randomly selected as case studies.

1) Material Culture Loaded Words

Material culture load words, on the other hand, include labor or material words related to economy, food, clothing, transportation and so on, formed by people in the process of improving their material life (Wei Shu, 2020).

例1: 省人民检察院的特级侦查员丁钩儿搭乘一辆拉煤的解放牌卡车到市郊的罗山煤矿进行一项特别调查。
(莫言, 2020: 1)

Special Investigator Ding Gou'er of the Higher Procuratorate climbed aboard a Liberation truck and set out for the Mount Luo Coal Mine to undertake a special investigation. (Goldblatt, 2011:1)

The Jie Fang automobile was successfully manufactured on July 13, 1956, at the Changchun No. 1 Automobile Manufacturing Plant. Before the liberation, there were more than 130 kinds of cars of different brands on the highway of our country, just like the opening of the "universal car exhibition", but none of them was made in our country. The introduction of the Jiefang brand automobile put an end to the history of our country's inability to produce automobiles. The liberation automobile symbolizes the beginning of China's march towards political, economic and cultural freedom. Professor Ge Haowen's use of naturalization and paraphrasing makes the brand of the car easier to understand, but it loses the true meaning of Chinese.

例2: 马在吃**筐**里的草料;

...and as the horse ate from its feedbag

Colander is a kind of container made of bamboo splints or willow branches. Its size, squareness, depth and other forms vary according to its use. Until today, colanders can still be seen in thousands of households in China. Alienation or direct translation will bring more exotic colors to the article, but it is not easy to understand. Mr. Ge Hao Wen used the method of Italian translation in order to make the layout of the article reasonable and in line with the original meaning. Feeding the bag makes the reader realize the real meaning of the article at a glance.

例3: 毛驴的平坦额头上缀着一朵崭新的**红缨**, 宛如暗夜中的一束火苗。

The donkey's broad forehead was decorated with a red tassel.

Here Prof. Ge Hao Wen uses the direct translation method to translate the red tassel as red tassel, which is often seen in the countryside, and its most important use is to decorate high mules and big horses. Red tassel construction is not very complex, as long as the hemp split into strands of fine silk, dyed red, cut neatly, tied into a large handle, small handle on the line. Smaller called red tasseled flowers, large called torch flowers. In the mule, horse saddle, fan tail, planted a red

tasseled flowers, forehead tied on a torch-shaped red tasseled wadding, like the red durian, like a sunset. When the mule, horse traveling in the avenue, highway, bicycles, tractors, automobiles, endless stream, bustling, when they head of the red tassel swinging back and forth, can be distracted to reduce the outside world interference, to avoid accidents caused by shock. It is a "tranquilizer" to calm the mind.

例4: 看门人爬起来, 双手依然捂着头, 脸色焦黄, 像优质的年糕一样。

The gatekeeper climbed to his feet, still holding his head in his hands. His complexion was sallow, the color of a fine year-end cake.

例5: 一个举着寿桃的粉红色裸体男娃咧着小嘴巴哈哈笑, 在墙上, 在年画上, 他的美丽的小鸡儿像一粒粉红的蚕蛹, 蠢蠢欲动, 栩栩如生。

On the wall hung a laughing, pink-skinned, naked toddler with a longevity peach in his hands - a new year's scroll - his darling little pecker poking up like a pink, wriggly silkworm chrysalis.

2) Linguistic and cultural load words

Language is the carrier of literary works. Linguistic and cultural load words reflect the different characteristics of languages under different language families. For example, idioms, proverbs, sayings and so on, these words reflect the unique linguistic characteristics of Chinese writing, so they are called linguistic and cultural load words. We usually find such words in Chinese classical writings, myths and legends and other works (Wei Shu, 2020).

例6: “为伊消得人憔悴, 衣带渐宽终不悔”。

‘For thou I shalt waste away, happy that the clothes hang loose on my body.’

The song "Butterfly Lovers Flower - Leaning on a Dangerous Building and Windy" is a song by Liu Yong, a Song Dynasty lyricist. In the last two lines, he writes about tenderness with a strong pen, swearing that he is willing to be thin and emaciated for the sake of missing his wife. The whole lyric skillfully combines the feeling of being downcast in a foreign land with the lingering thoughts of being in love with the person of your choice, showing the hero's resolute character and persistent attitude, and successfully portraying the image of a man who is sincere in his ambition. Here, Prof. Ge Haowen also translates these two lines in the form of poetry, which is faithful to the original text in terms of form and meaning, and conveys the exotic culture to the readers in a more reasonable way.

例7: 于是他问: “你怀孕了吗?”

所有的过渡性语言都被抛弃, 好像有些夹生, 但她吞下去夹生, 用近乎无耻的口吻说: 我有毛病, 盐碱地。”

‘So, are you pregnant?’ he blurted out.

Now that he'd dispensed with conventional small talk, the question hung out there like half-cooked food. But she forced it down her gullet and said almost brazenly:

‘I've got a problem, what they call alkaline soil’

Saline soil is a type of salt accumulation, a condition in which the salt contained inside the soil affects the normal growth of crops. The original author uses saline here to indicate the lack of fertility of this lady. The direct translation and the linguistic context of the preceding and following texts make the true meaning of the term clear. The reader does not have to make any effort to understand it. A direct translation in a rich linguistic environment not only makes it easy for the reader to accept, but also makes it easy for the translator.

例8: “安全生产庆祝五一”

Safety First Celebrate May Day

The function of a tagline is to convey a great deal of energy using short catchy words. These slogans can be found everywhere in China. The direct translation conveys the importance of safety and the wishes of the people of the time for the holiday. Therefore, direct translation is still a good choice when it comes to translating distinctive phrases and words.

例9: 他听到平头友善地说:

“您不要着急, 心静自然凉。”

Crewcut say consolingly:

‘Don't worry, you'll cool off as you calm down.’

Crewcut refers to the person's hairstyle, the most obvious feature on the person's body, not really called flat head. Maybe crewcut is also the person's nickname. The direct translation also allows the reader to understand what the reader means.

Jing refers to a natural and peaceful state of mind when dealing with the world, treating others and living in seclusion and solitude. The original meaning is that the heart is calm and naturally cool. Later, it is used to refer to the fact that when encountering problems, difficulties, or setbacks, one should calm the mind and deal with the problems in life with a normal heart. Here Prof. Ge Haowen obviously did not understand the true meaning of this proverb, and he still used a direct translation to translate it out. But he failed to bring the true meaning of the saying to the readers.

例10: “首长, 您没醉, 像您这般出色的人物怎么会醉呢? 我们这里醉酒的都是些没有知识、没有教养的下里巴人, 阳春白雪从来不醉, 您是阳春白雪, 所以您没有醉。”

‘You're not drunk, Boss,’ Crewcut replied. ‘How could a superior individual like you be drunk? People around here who get drunk are the dregs of society, illiterates, uncouth people. Highbrow folks, those of the “spring snow,” cannot get drunk. You're a highbrow, therefore, you cannot be drunk.’

Yangchunbaixue was composed by Shi Kuang of Jin, the "Sage of Music" during the Spring and Autumn Period. The "Secret Record of Magic" says in the explanation: "Yangchun" takes the meaning that everything knows spring and the breeze is light and swinging; "Baixue" takes the sound of austerity and cleanliness and the sound of snow and bamboo."

Yangchun and Baixue were later introduced into Chu: they became the more artistic and difficult songs of Chu during the Warring States period. Later it was generalized to refer to high, unpopular literary art.

Xia Li Ba Ren (下里巴人), pronounced xià lǐ bā rén (下里巴人), originally referred to a kind of song popular in the folklore of Chu during the Warring States period, and is now used as a metaphor for popular literature and art. Yang Chun Bai Xue is the opposite of Xia Li Ba Ren, which is a metaphor for profound, unpopular literary art. However, these two terms are often mistakenly used as Yangchunbaixue for a person of high moral character or an upper class person. Lower Li Ba Ren, on the other hand, is mistaken for a country bumpkin or a lower class person. The original author used it here, presumably to deliberately satirize the fact that some officials, despite their official positions, have a low level of culture. Mr. Ge Haowen adopted the direct translation method in his translation, which is close to the original author's intention.

例11: 我已将大作寄给《国民文学》编辑部, 那里云

集着中国当代最优秀的文学编辑，如果您是千里马，相信会有伯乐来发现。

...If you are a true 'thousand-li steed,' I am confident there's a master groom out there somewhere for you.

"Bole and the Thousand-Mile Horse" is a story from "Strategies of the Warring States - Chu Ce IV", which was quoted by Khan Ming when he met Chun Shen Jun. The relationship between Bole and a Thousand-Mile Horse is clarified here. There are always thousand-horse, but there are few Boles who appreciate thousand-horse. Throughout the ages, Chinese aspirants often use thousand-horse as a metaphor to show that they are not appreciated and reused. Prof. Ge Haowen here translates the term "thousand-mile horse" to mean a horse that can run a thousand miles. This is a direct translation that does not lose the original meaning of the word, but at the same time preserves the characteristics of the foreign culture and gives the readers the space to learn and understand on their own.

3. Conclusion

It is difficult to find direct counterparts for culturally loaded words as the characteristic vocabulary of a nation in another cultural context. However, based on his judgment of the source text and the degree of expectation of the target language, Ge Haowen, the translator, adopts the method of direct translation, Italian translation and omission, which makes the source text and the translated text reach the approximation of the context, and thus the readers can get the maximum contextual effect through the minimum effort to achieve the purpose of cultural exchange. However, this process will still cause readers' misunderstanding due to the cultural omission of culturally loaded words. Therefore, this paper argues that the criterion of optimal relevance is still unclear and needs further development.

Acknowledgments

We thank my thesis advisor - Mr.Lu, and the monographs of the scholars cited in this thesis.

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