



Approaches to Translation of Chinese Publicity Materials

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Abstract

Chinese publicity materials are the windows for foreigners to know about China. There has been some problems in the translation for publicity materials both made by the enterprises and government departments. Especially for the growing international communication, the dispute between Chinese and its foreign counterpart is increasingly coming into being because of poor translation. Thus, how to translate Chinese publicity materials and whether you can translate them well have great impact on image and interests of China and its enterprises. This paper intends to discuss culture differences and the differences of language forms, some translation strategies or approaches, translation principles and so on. The paper pays much attention to the efficient information transfer in translation. Feasible methods have been proposed from different aspects in this paper, so that we can improve translation performance in order to convey information effectively and facilitate international communication.

Keywords: Chinese publicity materials, Culture differences, Language forms, Approaches, Information transfer

1. Introduction

Publicity materials, by which China can show herself to foreigners, are all-inclusive. Advertisements, tourist publicity materials, products catalogue lists, functional directions of products, publicity volume for attracting foreign enterprises, project brochures all belong to them. Publicity materials also include handbooks which are to introduce organizations or corporations, brochures for students' recruitment of universities and colleges, the notes to present a place, a local produce, historical personnel, romantic stories, and so on. Sometimes they are in the form of pictures and diagrams. According to the linguistic function, publicity materials can be divided into five types, which are directive function, referential/informative function, phatic function, expressive function and aesthetic function. In this paper, we will specially talk about directive function and informative function, which refer to tourism guidebook, user's manual, the advertisements to introduce some products and so on.

In China, so many publicity materials appear due to high economic development. However, different translators have different opinions when translating them into English. Sometimes foreigners even can not know what the exact meaning they are. So some translation strategies or approaches will be discussed in the paper. In addition, the aims of publicity material are to introduce oneself and transmit information what foreigners needed. So the informative function is the principle in translation, so that information transmission and international communication will go smoothly.

Last but not the least, different nations have their own culture background, so they have different thoughts about value and different language forms. In translating Chinese publicity materials, we should not only pay attention to words translation, but also should take these differences into consideration in order that foreigners can get the exact information. And a satisfactory outcome will reach after the careful study on the topic. Then the following discussion is especially directed to its exploration accordingly.

2. A Brief Introduction of Translation Strategies of Chinese Publicity Materials

2.1 The Introduction of Translation Approaches

In accordance with what has been argued, this paper will set forth several translation approaches later. As far as these approaches are concerned, different translators may adopt different methods, and there are so many ways to translate Chinese publicity materials. Here the writer just expound upon some methods which are the most important and used frequently.

The aims of translating Chinese publicity materials are to let more and more foreign people know about China, to convey information and to stimulate international communication as well. Thus, all the approaches proposed in this paper, different from the ordinary ones, are just for these purposes. This part focuses on different aspects of publicity materials translation. The approaches that we commonly take are to add some information if necessary and delete

information which are not needed, the reliance on word formation patterns, explanation and translation on the basis of deep understanding of the original, or translation and edition.

2.2 The Use of Word Formation

First of all, we inquire into the translation of some new words which have come into being in recent years, and new words with new translations. Under these situations, sometimes, we will take the use of word formation into account, or resort to another new ways to translate them. For instance, we prefer to say “the anti-humanity, anti-society, anti-science nature of the cult” when we translate the sentence “fan ren lei, fan she hui, fan ke xue de xie jiao ben zhi”, rather than “the nature of the cult is to against humanity, against society and against science.” The main point or what the author really wants to emphasize is lost in the second version although there is no mistake in grammar. There are some other instances, “tong yi de duo min zu guo jia” we prefer translating them as “unified multi-ethnic group” to “unified country with many different nations”. When we see “shi yong fang bian” in an advertisement, we usually say “it is very convenient to use”. But in the version of publicity material, we’d better say “user-friendly” to make foreigners feel new and accept easily. When it refers to some other new words appeared in tourism, we may use compounding to translate them. Examples as: “ke ji lv you”, we use “science-theme tourism” instead of “scientific and technological tourism”. Meanwhile, we can adopt blending to translate some newly appeared words. We can see the author use “ecotourism” to annotate “sheng tai lv you”, and it is good for using “ecological tourism”. And the word “infotainment”(information + entertainment) is used to translate “yu le xing jie mu xin wen” in publicity materials.

In addition, we have been accustomed to using “construction” to translate “jian she” in the before. Take “yi jing ji jian she wei zhong xin” as an example, the translation used to be “to take on economic construction as the central task”. But now, we are inclined to use “reconstruction” instead of “construction” according to the need. Such as “jian chi yi jin ji jian she wei zhong xin”(We will continue to focus on economic reconstruction). And sometimes, “jian she” is not translated under any other circumstances. The example is “da li jia qiang jin shen wen ming he she hui ming zhu jian she”(We should make great efforts to improve socialist spiritual civilization, democracy and legal system). Let us look at another example “lian zheng jian she”. This phrase has been translated as “construct clean politics” before, which is not appropriate just now. “Politics” is always used as a derogatory term, as “office politics” refers to the competition and struggle in the office. So it is translated as “build a clean and honest government” in the publicity material now.

2.3 Explanation

In the opinion of experts, no matter how successful the Chinese texts are, if translated into English literally, they will not be easy and smooth translations and sometimes make foreigners feel confused. (duanliancheng,1990) In China, there are so many new phenomenon and issues that people just use concise and comprehensive words in order to convey information conveniently, such as: “shaohuang”, “dafei”, “yanda”, “sanpei” and so on. As for foreigners, they probably do not know what they are pointing to. We should explain information in detail so that they can understand what they are driving at. Sometimes, translators translate Chinese into English, adding explanations with Chinese alphabet or phonetic spelling.

When we talk about a place for tourism or introduce Chinese culture which Chinese people have already had at their finger tips to foreigners, we’d better add some words for explanation. In a publicity material there is a sentence:

(1) Linbianyouyidong,jiaobailongdong,chuanshuo<baishezhuang>debailiangzicenzaizhelixiulian

Near the forest is the White Dragon Cave which is said to be the very place where Lady White, the legendary heroine of the story of the White Snake, cultivated herself according to Buddhist doctrine. (Songxiaochun,2002)

2.4 Edition before Translation

Translators resort to the method of edition before translation due to so many factors. Edition means to deal with, add, delete, edit or rearrange the sentences of the original material after the author deeply understand them, and then translate them into the sentences or forms which are acceptable to foreigners on the basis of their psychology, interest and habits. So what is the most important, translators must have a good understanding of the original passage, and then edit the materials. Only in this way can translators transform the source language to the target language, so as to eliminate cross-culture misunderstanding and let readers get what they needed so that information can pass on effectively. Let us look at the following examples.

(2) Zai zhong guo yi ti dao kong zi, shang zhi bai fa cang cang de lao ren xia zhi tian zhen you zhi de wan tong, wu ren bu zhi wu ren bu xiao, ren men wei le ji nian ta, zai xu duo di fang dou jian you ji si ta de si miao,tian jin ye bu li wai)

This is a typical Chinese expression, before translating it, we may readjust it like this: kong zi zai zhong guo jia yu hu xiao, zai zhong guo xu duo di fang bao kuo tian jin zai nei dou jian you ji nian ta de si miao) The translation is as follow: Confucius is a household name in China Temples in memory of him could be found everywhere in China. Tianjin is no exception.

(3) ban sui zhuo gai ge kai fang de jiao bu, 21 you er yuan zou guo le 13 nian de fa zhan li chen, jing guo quan ti zhi

gong de nv li, ta men lian xu qi nian bei ping wei qu ji jiao yu gong zuo he quan mian gong zuo guan li you xiu dan wei; 1997-1999 huoshi weisheng xian jindan wei; 1997-1999 you duo ming qing nian jiao shi zai jiao yu huo dong ping bi he you xiu bi ye lun wen ping bi zhong huo jiang.

In this material, the information makes readers confused. If we do not edit or delete information that are not needed, understanding will be interrupted. Translation should be like this: The 21st kindergarten has been a success since it was set up 13 years ago. For 7 consecutive years, it has been given various honorary titles by Hedong District. From 1997 to 1999 it was commended by the municipal government for its hygienic conditions. The young teachers, doing well in various contests, have won many awards. (wangzuoliang, 1984)

After all, we must keep it in mind that we should be loyal to the original, no matter how we translate all these publicity materials. So we use above different techniques like explaining, paraphrasing, literally interpreting if necessary, replacing and borrowing to represent translations of publicity materials.

3. The Study of Information Transfer in Translating Publicity Materials

Publicity materials are the medium by which information can be conveyed quickly and clearly. In order to speed up international communication, the most important thing in translating is information transfer. So information is the theme in each publicity material. Meanwhile, failure in conveying the intended message in the translation of advertising discourse from Chinese into English may be caused by differences between the two cultures. To avoid such failure, the authors argue, the first thing interpreters must do is that they need to have a good understanding of cultures represented by both source language and target language to eliminate cross-cultural misunderstanding. Thus, translators will know what information is needed and what is unnecessary so as to do some transformation. For example, after presenting many nice dishes, the Chinese hostess always say, “fan cai bu hao, qing duo bao han” (Please bear with these poorly prepared dishes). It’s generally acceptable to Chinese people that the hostess says this to express her modesty and welcome. All Chinese guests may then admire her cooking. However guests from Britain might end up thinking, “Am I not good enough to get well-prepared dishes?” To avoid this uncomfortable situation, the translation should be, “These are the best dishes I’m able to prepare, enjoy yourselves.” Therefore, different cultures and different translations transfer different information. Translators should take different factors into account.

In short, different forms have the same purpose, that is, to convey information. The author will dwell on message transfer in this part.

3.1 The Approach to Translation of Publicity Materials with Diagrams

Publicity materials with diagrams or pictures can easily express ideas, especially for introducing locations. The translator should integrate different information and then translate them into the form which can be accepted easily by readers. Look at the sentence in brochures for attracting foreign investment.

3.2 The Approach to Translation of Publicity Materials in Abbreviated Form

Many publicity materials are complicated, while translating, we just need to translate them in abbreviated form, that is to say to translate the key words or main ideas as the title or topic to grasp the key link. Moreover, we can briefly outline the material. So readers can get the information conveniently. Let us move on to the following advertisement that aims to introduce a corporation. The content of the material is so long and complicated that even Chinese can not get the needed information quickly, let alone foreigners. While translating, we’d better use words as a title or topic at the beginning of each part on the basis of the foreigners’ habits, in order that the content can be clear and straightforward. So the foreigners can get the important and needed information quickly rather than spend too much time in going through the whole material. In the following example, the translator use “stated”, “located”, “research and management staff”, “business area and capacity” and “business belief” as the key words at the beginning of each part in this publicity material.

3.3 The Translation of Oral Language and Words with Chinese Cultures

As for oral language, figure expressions, parallel structures and antithesis, they are used to strengthen effect and have no real content. Sometimes, it will cause misunderstandings to foreigners if they are not translated appropriately. We need to deal with the information properly in order that people can obtain the exact information and information can be conveyed effectively.

3.4 Information Transformation in Translation

Because each individual society has its own common knowledge and each language has its own dimensions and custom, translators must tend to seek the most proper information in the most appropriate form for readers to appreciate. In order to achieve this purpose, information transformation is needed, in addition, some supplementary method is necessary. (zhang mei fang, 2000) Only in this way can the original information be conveyed to the readers.

There is a Chinese saying, “qiao fu nan wei wu mi zhi chui”, the better translation of which should be “It is clever wife

that can cook a meal without material.” There are contradictions in the culture of diet, in China, “mi” refers to rice while in foreign countries it also includes flour, bread and so on. So we choose “material” to be as the best word to convey the information.

In China, we always prefer to use repetitions and emphasis to get better effect, which are complex and long-winded for people speaking English. On the contrary, they resort to simple and effective words. The translator adopts the phrase “vice versa” according to English language convention to convey information effectively.

6. Conclusion

All in all, in the translation of publicity materials we should pay attention not only to the words, but also to the information transfer. All the publicity materials are translated for the purpose of conveying information. By ways of case analysis, the study shows that control of information supply in the target text and conveyance of the source text’s implication are two ways in English translation of Chinese publicity language. After illustrating typical examples, this paper clarifies different aspects of approaches to translation of Chinese publicity materials. Therefore, all the efforts mentioned are aimed to improve the C-E translation for international communication so as to speed up the development of China.

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