

Original Paper

On the C-E Translation of Chinese Internet Buzzwords from the Perspective of Domestication and Foreignization

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Abstract

With the development and popularization of internet, there are a large number of foreigners coming to China so as to learn Chinese language as well as understand Chinese culture. The English translation of Chinese internet buzzwords can not only help them learn more about Chinese culture but also strengthen its soft power. Scholars in recent years have made a great progress on the study of the translation of Chinese internet buzzwords. Though they have written papers related to domestication and foreignization and take some examples to interpret their thoughts but they did not have a detailed interpretation to them.

This paper mainly studies English translation of Chinese internet buzzwords from the perspective of domestication and foreignization and choose proper translation skills according to their features. Domestication is the translation strategy of making text closely conform to the culture of the language being translated to whereas foreignization is the translation strategy that preserves the feature of the source text so that the meaning of the source text can be fully expressed. But neither of them is perfect. Therefore, we should choose proper translation strategies during translation in order to express the original intention of the source text.

Keywords

Domestication, Foreignization, Chinese Internet Buzzwords, C-E translation

1. Introduction

Internet buzzwords are an increasingly important part of our modern culture. Internet buzzwords are not only a language phenomenon but also a social, cultural and psychological one. They reflect social changes, cultural life and public psychology. And for many foreigners, who come to China in order to stay close to Chinese culture, learning internet buzzwords and using them in their daily lives will help

them have more profound understandings towards modern Chinese culture. Therefore, internet buzzwords is one of soft power of Chinese culture, which makes translation of internet buzzwords more significant.

However, since the fast updating speed and short history of internet buzzwords, professors in the academic circles pay less attention towards them. In addition, people who have once studied the C-E translation of internet buzzwords are not in a very systematic way. Though there are plenty of studies on how to translate internet buzzwords in recent years, it is not hard to say that they do have something in common. Therefore, this paper will introduce some of studies concerning the internet buzzwords itself and the translation strategies and draw a conclusion about the relationship between the two translation strategies, domestication and foreignization.

2. Internet Buzzwords Translation by Domestication

Domestication and foreignization are two translation strategies that mainly relate to not only linguistics but also culture and aesthetics. And there are many skills linking to the perspective of linguistics during translation.

In this section three translation skills of domestication, namely, free translation, amplification and omission, will be mentioned and several examples that relate to politics and economy, science and technology, and social life and culture will be put up and analyzed qualitatively by certain skills. And all examples come from internet buzzwords of the year by the magazine *Yaowenjiaozhi* and the Buzzwords of the Year, held by the National Language Resources Monitoring and Research Center, the Commercial Press and People's Daily. And since free translation is the most common translation skill and most of internet buzzwords in the list of the Buzzwords of the Year are translated freely, examples of amplification and omission are not as much as the section of free translation has.

2.1 Free Translation

Free translation is a translation method that sacrifices the forms of the source language for the sake of elegance and intelligibility in the target language. "A free translation expresses the sense of the original words without being absolutely exact" (Chamber, 1995). Some internet buzzwords, related to either politics and economy or social life and culture, are hard for foreigners to understand if translating them literally. Therefore, we should translate them and express full meanings of the original words.

打 call: Version 1: to put one's glow stick up for somebody

Version 2: to support somebody

People, especially foreigners from the West, might be very confused when seeing the phrase. "Call" in English means a telephone communication or conversation. The verb in Chinese is a word means telephoning (a person or telephone number) when collocating with "call". If we see it literally, the phrase will be misunderstood into "calling or telephoning somebody". Actually, the phrase is from Japanese with the meaning of the shouting and cheering of audience in the concert at first. And then it is changed into the meaning that the audiences interact with the singer by moving their glow stick in

rhythm and then it is used to support someone or something. Thus, its English version should be “to put one’s glow stick up for somebody” or “to move one’s glow sticks for somebody”, which preserves its original intention. And if we simply translate it into “to support somebody”, the translation will be too plain without the lively description of the original meaning.

任性: Version 1: be capricious

Version 2: remain firm and steady in

The phrase is popularized after the spokesperson of CPPCC when he mentioned anti-corruption. The interpreter translated the sentence into “We can be said to be capricious in fighting against corruption”. In Oxford Advanced learner’s English-Chinese Dictionary (Eight Edition), “capricious” means “given to sudden and unaccountable changes of mood or behavior”. It is easy to see that the meaning of the word “capricious” reverse the original meaning of the spokesperson. For the spokesperson, the phrase is used to show the firm resolution of the government towards anti-corruption. Another translator translated it into “We will remain firm and steady in backing the anti-graft campaign”. It means that the government has paid a great attention to corruption and has a firm resolution to fight against it. This version of translation is more succinct and fully express the meaning of the phrase.

In this part, two internet buzzwords have been translated by free translation and the reasons have been analyzed. For words whose meaning cannot be understood from its expression, free translation expresses the sense of the original words at the cost of the forms. It is a great method to translate internet buzzwords about all categories, social life and culture, politics and economy and science and technology.

2.2 Amplification

Amplification is a translation skill in which words omitted or not expressed obviously in the source text should be amplified during translation in order to fully express the content of the source text and correspond to the syntax of the target language. The goal of amplification is to complete the meaning of the source text so that the target readers can fully understand the text.

吃瓜群众: Version 1: netizens

Version 2: Weibo users

Version 3: onlookers who are unaware of the facts

Version 4: The big crowd who is watching you

The phrase means netizens who discuss headlines online and there are many different translation versions of it. The Daily Telegraph simply translated it into “netizens” and “internet users” when reporting the news about Mark Horton. And when Quartz, an American news website, reported the interview of Fu Yuanhui, it was translated into “netizens” and “Weibo users” since most of them discusses the news in Weibo. Los Angeles Times used “ordinary social media fans” to express the meaning of the phrase when reporting the scandal about Wang Baoqiang. Those translation versions are too plain to express neither the full meaning nor the lively image, though those versions are frequently used in many foreign media. China Daily translated it into “onlookers who are unaware of the facts” or

“public who are kept in darkness”. In Oxford Advanced Learner’s English-Chinese Dictionary (Eight Edition), an “onlooker” means “a non-participating observer”. The translation from China Daily amplified the meaning of the phrase on the basis of “onlookers” and described them into the image of innocence. YEEWORLD, the famous translation subscription account in Wechat, translated it into “The big crowd who is watching everything”, which got inspiration from the famous remark of 1984, “The big brother is watching you”. Actually, the phrase are not people who know nothing about the headlines. On the contrary, they are smart to link every small detail and some of them are people who are in the know. Thus the translation “onlookers who are unaware of the facts” differs from the original one and it might be amended into “onlookers who are attracted and digging into affairs”. But “The big crowd who is watching you” is better. It not only remains the graphic expression of the original one but parodies the famous remark which is familiar to foreigners.

打虎拍苍: Version 1: bring corrupt officials of all rank to justice

Version 2: to crush the little “flies” among corrupt officials instead of targeting just “tigers” holding important offices

Version 3: battle both “tigers” and “flies”

The phrase was in vogue since president Xi mentioned it in one party meeting to express party’s determination of the anti-corruption campaign. In Chinese it means to tackle corrupt officials large and small, in which the character “Hu” refers to corrupt officials at the top and another character “Cang” refers to corrupt officials at the bottom. In the version “bring corrupt officials of all rank to justice”, “bring something to justice”, in Oxford Advanced learner’s English-Chinese Dictionary (Eight Edition), means “to arrest someone for a crime and ensure that they are tried in court”, which fully expresses the meaning of the phrase but the vivid image of the word is lost. And BBC translated the word into “battle both ‘tigers’ and ‘flies’”, in which “Hu” and “Cang” are literally translated into “tiger” and “flies” in inverted commas. It is obvious that the translation maintain its original graphic expression but it will make people who know little about current events feel confused that what “tigers” and “flies” refers to. The version provides by India Times might be the best one. India Times translated it into “to crush the little ‘flies’ among corrupt officials instead of targeting just ‘tigers’ holding important offices”. It means that tackling “tigers”, the prominent part of anti-corruption campaign, is not the sole one and cracking down on “flies”, corruption at the bottom, is also significant, which has the same meaning with the phrase in Chinese. India Time amplified meanings of “flies” and “tigers” in the issue by which readers would have a clear mind of the title and the event.

In this part, two internet buzzwords have been translated by amplification. Through analyzing several translations of one source text, we will find amplification can make the translation more complete and make the text more readable. This skill can be applied during the translation of buzzwords about social life and economy since words related to this category contain many cultural elements which are hard to understand.

2.3 Omission

Omission is a translation skill that omitting words whose meanings have been repeated during translation if the full meaning of the source text is not changed. It is to make the translation pithy and smooth.

砥砺前行: Version 1: work hard to press ahead

Version 2: forge ahead

In the Report on the Work of the Government 2017, this phrase was translated into “work hard to press ahead” while it was translated into “forge ahead” in the Report on the Work of the Government 2018, with the cooperation with western experts. The first two characters in Chinese means “work hard to do something” and the latter two characters in Chinese means “work hard to make progress”. Thus, it is obvious to see that the two parts contain a similar meaning. The version of 2017 translated the phrase word by word. This kind of translation could be said to be faithful to the original language but in Oxford Advanced learner’s English-Chinese Dictionary (Eight Edition), “press ahead” has the meaning that “continue in one’s action”, which has a repetitive meaning with “work hard”. “Forge ahead” in the dictionary means “continue or make progress with a course or undertaking”, which is succinct but fully indicates the original meaning of the phrase.

Omission is always used in the translation of internet buzzwords about politics and economics. Because buzzwords about politics and economics are usually made up by four Chinese characters in which the first two characters have the similar meaning with the last two characters. Therefore, if every character of a phrase is translated, the translation will be wordy and repetitive so that it will be lack of attraction. Three translation skills of domestication have been introduced and applied in case studies of some internet buzzwords. It is obvious that with domestication the meaning of the source texts expressed fully so that foreigners unfamiliar with Chinese culture can understand internet buzzwords easily. And in domestication part, since free translation are more suitable for most of internet buzzwords, more examples in that section have been put up.

3. Internet Buzzwords Translation by Foreignization

In this section three translation skills of foreignization, literal translation, transliteration and literal translation plus transliteration, will be mentioned and several examples that relate to politics and economy, science and technology, and social life and culture will be put up and analyzed qualitatively by certain skills. Since literal translation is the most common translation skill and most of internet buzzwords in the list of the Buzzwords of the Year are translated literally, examples of transliteration and literal translation plus transliteration are not as much as the section of literal translation has.

3.1 Literal Translation

Literal translation is a translation that follows closely not only the content but also the form of the source language, so it is also known as word-for-word translation. “A literal translation is one which follows the words of the original exactly without considering the general meaning or style of the text”

(Chanber, 1995).” The translation method of Literal translation is always used when translating internet buzzwords related to social life and culture and politics and economics. Translating internet buzzwords about social life and culture literally will remain the lively image and the original characteristics of the source text. And many internet buzzwords about politics and economics are full of Chinese characteristics and there is no corresponding word in English, thus they will be translated literally.

友谊的小船: Version 1: the boat of friendship

Version 2: friend-ship

The phrase is one of the most famous internet buzzwords in 2016 since a comics became famous in Weibo. Netizens translated it into “The boat of friendship tips over whenever wherever”, in which the phrase in the example was literally translated into “the boat of friendship”. This phrase might come from a famous American TV series called “Friends”. “What kind of ship can never sink? Friend-ship .” In Oxford Advanced learner’s English-Chinese Dictionary (Eight Edition), “friendship” means “a relationship between friends” and “ship” means “a large boat for transporting people or goods by sea”. So the word “ship” has already contained the meaning of “boat”. “Friend-ship” might be the best translation for it.

剁手党: Version 1: hand-chopping people

Version 2: shopaholic

With the popularity of shopping online, it is easier for people to buy many things without realizing it since the money spent online is considered as “a virtual number”. Thus the phrase came in sight. It means people who are addicted into shopping online and buy a large number of useless things. After calming down, they always regret their impulse purchases and want to chop their hands in case they do impulse purchases again but they will resume their shopping. China Daily provides two translations of it, hand-chopping people and shopaholics. The suffix “aholic” refers to “one that is addicted to or compulsively in need of something”. Therefore, a “shopaholic” is a person considered to be addicted to shopping. There are some differences between “shopaholic” and the phrase in the example, because “shopaholic” does not contain the meaning that the person feel regretful but still buy things impulsively then. “Hand-chopping people” translates the phrase literally. In Oxford Advanced learner’s English-Chinese Dictionary (Eight Edition), “chop” means “remove something by cutting”. Therefore, “hand-chopping” means “remove one’s hands by cutting”. It remains the graphic expression of the original language that people who have spent a large sum of money on shopping want to chop their hands in case that more money will be used.

撸起袖子加油干: Version 1: The nation remains mobilized for brand new endeavors.

Version 2: We roll up our sleeves and work with added energy.

On the part of translation of internet buzzwords about politics and economics, the translations of the phrases is more representative. It is a phrase from President Xi Jinping’s 2017 New Year Message. CRI translated it into “The nation remains mobilized for brand new endeavors” whereas CCTV translated it literally into “We roll up our sleeves and work with added energy”. The difference between those two

translation versions is mainly on their translations of the first part. It is easy to see that CRI expresses the meaning of the phrase while sacrificing the graphic image of the first part and CCTV who is more faithful to the original contents translates the phrase literally. In Oxford Advanced learner's English-Chinese Dictionary (Eight Edition), "roll up one's sleeves" means "prepare to fight or work". And it is common for people from all nations to roll up our sleeves before endeavoring to do something. So it is not hard for westerners to understand "roll up our sleeves". In addition, Chinese internet buzzwords, as an important part of Chinese culture, plays a role of enhancing our soft power. The phrase is told by our president Xi Jinping on the New Year Message, which is a big moment to spread our culture.

移动支付: Mobile payment

With the popularization of Alipay and Wechat payment, an increasingly number of people leave their purses at home and go outside with their smart phones only. Thus the phrase, the hottest internet buzzword related to technology, is in vogue. In Chinese it means that users of payment applications can pay their bills whenever wherever that the payments will not be restricted by distance and time. "Mobile" in English, according to Oxford Advanced learner's English-Chinese Dictionary(Eight Edition), means "able to move or be moved freely or easily", which is just equal to the meaning of "移动" that bills can be paid without the restriction of distance. Therefore, it is great to translate it literally into "mobile payment".

In this part, internet buzzwords about social life and culture, about science and technology and about politics and economy have been translated literally. Literal translation keeps the faithfulness of the original contents, which has been considered as one of the most important criteria in translation. It is a great method to translate internet buzzwords about social life and culture and politics and economy.

3.2 Transliteration

Transliteration consists in representing the characters of a given script by the characters of another, while keeping the operation reversible. The use of diacritics or digraphs solves the problem of different number of characters between the alphabets of two writing systems. The main goal of transliteration is to enable the automatic and unambiguous recreation of the original. And transliteration is usually applied in translating internet buzzwords related to social life and culture and science and technology. During the Chinese-English translation of internet buzzwords, Chinese characters are transliterated into pinyin and written by alphabets.

宝宝: Version 1: Baby

Version 2: Bao Bao

It is one of the most popular internet buzzwords. It is used as first person pronoun for netizens who try to act acute and innocent. Therefore its cuteness should be preserved in translation. Some people have translated it literally into "Baby" but the word "Baby" in western culture is often used as a form of address for a person with whom one is having a romantic relationship. Translating it into "Bao Bao" by transliteration is a great idea, which remains the cute dual pronunciation. And "Bao Bao" is also the

name of the giant panda, one of offspring of Meixiang, living in the National Zoo in Washington D.C. It is easy for foreigners to associate “Bao Bao” with the cute image of giant panda.

土豪: Version 1: tuhao

Version 2: nouveau riche

Version 3: upstart

In its original literary form, it refers to landlord or those of prominent and wealthy backgrounds. But in recent years, the old phrase popularizes again with its new meaning. Since in Chinese the character “Tu” means earth and the character “Hao” means rich. So the phrase is to imply that someone comes from a poor peasant background and have made rich quick but don’t have the manners or sophistication. Translating the phrase into “tuhao” by transliteration remains the vivid image of the phrase. Netizens provide other translations such as nouveau riche and upstart. “Nouveau riche” is used to describes the vulgarity and ostentation of the new-rich man who lack the worldly experience and the system of values of old money. Its meaning seems to be similar with the phrase, but the meaning of “nouveau riche” is more vulgar and derogatory. The word “upstart” means a person who has risen suddenly to wealth or high position, especially one who behaves arrogantly. The translation is too plain and lack of entertainment. Translating the phrase in pinyin and endowing “tuhao” the full meaning might be the best solution.

Transliteration is an easy, clear and effective way. It translates Chinese characters into pinyin and written by alphabets, which is like to create a new English word and give it a meaning. This skill can be applied to translate internet buzzwords about social life and culture and science and technology.

3.3 Literal Translation plus Transliteration

Since our Chinese culture is profound and splendid, it is hard to express full meaning of Chinese words or phrases in English and even if it can be expressed in English, it is inevitable that charm of Chinese words will be lost by translation. Transliteration is a great transliteration skill when translating internet buzzwords related to social life and culture. But the main function of translation is cultural communication, so if we translate everything by transliteration, it is hard for foreigners to understand them and therefore translation loses its meaning. It is great to translate words full of Chinese features by transliteration and using literal translation as an assistant.

洪荒之力: Version 1: prehistoric power

Version 2: one’s full potential, used all one’s strength

Version 3: HongHuang Power

The phrase is in vogue after Chinese competitive swimmer FuYuanhui used it after her swim and media home and aboard have provides many translations of the phrase. BBC and CCTV translated the phrase literally into “prehistoric power” since “honghuang” in Chinese means the stage or period before written records. But that is not the meaning it has today. The phrase has its new meaning at first when the Chinese TV series Hua Qian’gu used it to express the kind of power which was supernatural and could destroy everything. Therefore, there are some differences between the original one and the

translation. Daily Mail translated the phrase into “I have played my full potential, used all my strength”. It is obvious that the translation fully expressed what Fu Yuanhui wanted to show that she had already tried her best to swim. But from the first place, the translation loses the original vivid image of the phrase and from the second place, the translation is too long and plain which are contrary to the features of internet buzzwords, succinct and appealing. The best translation might be “HongHuang Power” in which the first two characters is translated into the pinyin of it, “HongHuang”, by transliteration and the character “Li” is translated literally into the word “power”. The background of “honghuang” is our old but splendid Chinese culture which is mysterious in the eyes of westerners. But today the world are more inclusive thus it might be the best time for them to accept new words with Chinese characteristics like words such as “kongfu” they have known before.

In this part, transliterate the part which is hard to be translated by pinyin, always adjectives and nouns related to culture and translate the rest part literally. Transliteration plus literal translation is often been used in the translation of internet buzzwords about social life and culture.

Three translation skills of foreignization have been introduced and applied in case studies of some internet buzzwords. Foreignization is a major translation strategy in which elements of alien culture have been remained as much as translators can. Though those elements are hard to be understood, they are the most significant things that should be translated.

4. Combination of Domestication and Foreignization

Domestication means that in the translation we should not disrupt the reader’s peace as much as possible and make the author get close to the reader. And foreignization means that in the translation we should not disrupt the tranquility of the original author as much as possible, so that the readers could get close to the author. However, neither domestication nor foreignization is perfect since each of them has flaws.

The phrase which has been mentioned above has been translated into “HongHuang power”. But foreigners will be confused what “HungHuang power” is when they see it at first and what they can only know literally is that it might be a kind of power. Therefore, the meaning of “HongHuang power” should be amplified in the brackets after the words that “all her energy” so that the word “HongHuang” with Chinese features can be full interpreted without losing its original charm.

葛优瘫: Ge You-esque slouching

The phrase becomes popular since its emoji package is in vogue online. The picture is from sitcom I Love My Family, in which Ge You, the actor, laid on the sofa in a lazy and drooping way. And it means that a person who is exhausted lies on the sofa with nothing in his mind so as to make himself relax. The English translation of it is “Ge You-esque slouching”, which uses the translation skills of transliteration and free translation. The suffix “esque” means “in the style of”. “Ge You-esque slouching” means a kind of slouching like what Ge You did in the picture. It not only remains the original feature but use “slouching” to interpret the condition when people did the gesture.

During translation, we should use foreignization as the dominated translating strategy in order to preserve exotic elements and characteristics whereas domestication should be used to cope with language barriers as a compromise package in order to make the translated text smooth and readable. Therefore in some condition we should use both domestication and foreignization during translation.

5. Conclusion

A high quality of the translation of Chinese internet buzzwords is not only closely related to the translation of Chinese language but also to the Chinese culture. In this essay I have discussed the two strategies of domestication and foreignization and six transliteration skills, free translation, amplification, omission, literal translation, transliteration and literal translation plus transliteration. I have made a detailed study of both the translation strategies and skills and the features of different categories of internet buzzwords. Domestication is easier for the target language readers to understand and accept for its similar expressions and styles to them. However, the smoothness of the target language is often achieved at the cost of the loss of the cultural flavor of the original text like CRI's translation as "The nation remains mobilized for brand new endeavors". As for foreignization, it preserves the original features of the original Chinese text. With the increasingly frequent contacts between the two cultures, the principles to stress the importance of the source language culture will be more likely to be widely used, and may eventually prevail. In the twenty first century the translation will be truly mature, and one of the main marks for its maturity is to pay attention to foreignization translation, while the core of translation of foreignization is to interpret the different character of the source language as far as possible.

And different categories of internet buzzwords have their unique features. In this essay, I have introduced six translation strategies, and studied their applications in the translation of internet buzzwords from different categories. During the translation, we should use proper translation skills according to the features of the original text.

In modern times, in order to introduce our Chinese culture to the outside, we need to use foreignization in the translation of Chinese internet buzzwords, which should be considered as a better translation strategy. So in the translation of Chinese internet buzzwords, domestication and foreignization are both the crucial strategies and a priority should be given to foreignization, because it can remain the features and charm of Chinese internet buzzwords so as to improve the quality of translation.

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