

Research on Cultural Interpretation in Translation of Ancient Chinese Poetry in Diplomatic Context

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Abstract

The cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries are becoming more and more frequent, and ancient Chinese poems and essays are also being quoted more and more in diplomatic occasions. Taking the live interpretation of ancient Chinese poems and texts at the Premier's press conference during the "two Sessions" as a case, this paper further explores the cultural interpretation in the translation of ancient Chinese poems and texts in the context of diplomacy, so as to provide some ideas for relevant research.

Keywords

Ancient poetry; Translation; Cultural interpretation.

1. Introduction

At the Premier's press conference, the leader often cites ancient Chinese poems to illustrate his views and answer questions. However, even though relevant translation studies have a certain foundation, how to accurately convey the cultural connotation and political meaning of quotations in a beautiful and authentic translation so that the target language audience can obtain and enjoy the same cultural information and artistic aesthetics as the native language audience still needs to be further studied.

2. Current situation of ancient poetry translation in the context of diplomacy

Most of the studies on the translation of ancient poems are confined to the theories and methods of literary translation, and there are few studies on cultural artistic conception. The translation of ancient poems and texts in the context of diplomacy started relatively late, mainly with the following problems.

2.1 Lack of system

There are abundant practical experience and profound theoretical foundation for literary translation at home and abroad. Some achievements have also been made in the study of ancient poetry translation in the diplomatic context. For example, Wang Haijiao from The School of Foreign Languages of Jilin Normal University ever wrote an article *A Brief Analysis of the Application of Functional Translation Theory in Government Propaganda texts*, and Zhang Yichi and Zhang Yingxian expressed their views in the paper *On the Aesthetic Reproduction of The English Translation of Ancient Chinese Poetry in Xi Jinping's Speech*. At present, although there are many related researches, most of them are scattered and lack of systematicness.

2.2 Incompleteness of the cultural mood

The first thing you need to know is what the mood is. In short, it is an ineffable meaning and realm that the audience feels. In ancient Chinese poetry, imagery is often indispensable to the construction of artistic conception. Therefore, this kind of image is endowed by the author with specific meaning, which has unique literary significance and profound meaning, and even becomes the symbol of complete works, so that it cannot be ignored. Chinese ancient poetry contains a variety of images, and artistic conception is also very different. Even most of the Chinese who have learned ancient poetry since childhood, due to the amount of knowledge and personal understanding deviation, cannot guarantee to accurately grasp the artistic conception of all ancient poetry and explain its meaning. The problem of incomplete cultural artistic conception is still difficult for people under the same cultural background, but it is even more difficult for people of different countries and nationalities under different cultural background. Thus, the translation becomes even more important.

2.3 Lack of cultural implications

In the process of translation of ancient poems and texts, if the translation is only rigidly faithful to the original text and literally translated word by word, it is easy to cause the lack of cultural implication and lead to ambiguous meaning. In 2010, Premier Wen Jiabao made a simile of the fact that mainland and Taiwan are facing each other across the sea with the expression “画是如此，人何以堪”. Premier Wen made a simile and expressed the hope that the two sides could move from separation to union at an early date. If it is translated word by word as “Not only the painting but also people are like this”, it obviously lacks cultural meaning, let alone political connotation.

3. Principles of ancient Poetry translation in the context of diplomacy

Professor Yang Mingxing proposed the “PEAR” principle, namely “Political Equivalence and Aesthetic Representation”. This requires that the translation should not only be faithful to the expression of the original text, but also be full of beauty. The “PEAR” principle, which combines the cultural and political connotations, is the highest level of ancient poetry translation in the current diplomatic context.

4. Translation strategies of Ancient Poetry in the context of diplomacy

4.1 literal translation

When the ancient poems and texts quoted in the diplomatic context are consistent both in ancient and current meaning, simple in content and easy to be understood by the foreign audience, literal translation can be adopted. In the press conference in 2009, Premier Wen quoted “取火莫若取燧，汲水莫若凿井”. The interpreter directly translated it as “But we know full well that we'd better fetch a flint than beg for lightwood, we'd better dig a well for ourselves than beg for water from others”. The sentence structure “had better... Than...” is used twice, which echoes the two “莫若” in the quotation. It is not only close to the original text, but also reflects the consistent metrical beauty of ancient Chinese texts. It is both loyal to the ancient Chinese prose and in line with English expression habits, which fully conveys the idea that leaders encourage citizens to rely on their own strength to overcome difficulties in the face of economic crisis.

4.2 Free translation

When the ancient poems and texts quoted in the context of diplomacy have different meanings between today and the ancient times, or the foreign language audience cannot understand them directly, free translation should be adopted.

For example, the translation of Chinese expression “骨肉之亲，析而不殊”. At the Premier's press conference in 2011, when discussing cross-Straits economic cooperation, Premier Wen quoted this saying to express that people on both sides of the Taiwan Straits are one family. Some of the cultural intentions in the original text are difficult for western reporters to understand. “骨肉” used to refer to

brothers and relatives, but now also refers to bones, flesh and blood; “析”, refers to separate in the old times, now has the meaning of analysis; “殊”, which used to mean separation and isolation, now has a meaning of “special”. This requires the translator not only to have profound literary background, but also accurately grasp the meaning of the original text, and give consideration to the exact meaning of the quoter and the recipient's cultural background and language habits, so as to make an appropriate translation. Translators adopt the method of free translation as “We are compatriots and I believe brothers though geographically apart will always be bound by their blood ties”. With the translation, the words “compatriots” and “brothers” accurately explained the expression “骨肉”; the word “geographically” clearly refers to the separation of geographical location; “be bound by blood ties” means we are one family and can not be separated. Like this, the explanation of the terms is clear, and the translation will come naturally.

4.3 Literal and free translation

In the process of translation, the method of literal translation and free translation (also known as comprehensive translation) often achieves good results. In 2008, the leader answered the question of emancipating the mind and carrying out reform and opening up by saying “天变不足畏，祖宗不足法，人言不足恤”. The interpretation is “One should not fear changes under the heaven and one should not blindly follow old conventions and one should not be deterred by complaints of others”. The literal translation method is adopted for “天变不足畏” and “人言不足恤”, which are translated as “One should not fear changes under the heaven” and “one should not be deterred by complaints of others”. “祖宗不足法” is translated with free translation as “one should not blindly follow old conventions”. “Old conventions” refers to “祖宗(ancestors)”, “法” made a free translation of “blindly follow”, which is very appropriate. It is wise for translators not to rely blindly on some translation methods, but to adopt literal translation for the concise content and free translation for the content to be explained and supplemented.

4.4 Application of sentence structure

No matter how short a sentence is, it has its own structure and is full of articles. In order to produce an accurate and authentic translation in a tense diplomatic situation, we can pay attention to the following two aspects.

One is to choose the exact words and phrases. For example, when translating the sentence “知我罪我，其惟春秋”, the interpreters chose the word “history” to refer to “春秋”, which clearly expresses the meaning of the speaker, avoids the knowledge blindness caused by the cultural difference between the East and the West, and fully takes into account the cultural background of foreign friends.

Second, the rational use of adverbs, conjunctions, attributives, clauses and other components is very important. For example, when Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi answered the reporters' questions on regional cooperation in Asia at the 2009 press conference, he quoted “以利合者，利尽则散”, which was interpreted as “Cooperation driven solely by profits will soon end when there is no profit to gain”. “driven solely by profits” was used as postpositive attributive, which means “friends driven solely by profits”; “When” is used to limit the unprofitable situation, which perfectly explains the meaning of the text.

5. Conclusion

Translation, as an official channel of communication between countries in various diplomatic occasions, has always attracted much attention. Therefore, to do a good job of translation in the context of diplomacy is a long and arduous task. This paper focuses on the translation of ancient poetry in the diplomatic context, especially studies its cultural interpretation, and systematically summarizes a set of strategies for the translation of ancient poetry in the diplomatic context according to the “PEAR” principle, in order to solve the three existing problems, lack of systematicness, incompleteness of cultural artistic conception and lack of cultural implication. It is hoped that this

paper can also provide reference for peer researchers and make a contribution to diplomatic translation in China.

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