
A Study of Translation Strategies about Festival Name in Guangxi

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ABSTRACT

China is a multi-ethnic group country with a long history. It is said that each nation has distinctive characteristics and different styles of folk culture. Then festival culture plays a significant role in China's traditional culture, which all ethnic groups developed for a long time. Guangxi is the region with the largest population of ethnic groups in China. There are common festivals of many ethnic groups and unique festivals of ethnic groups in Guangxi. With the implementation of "Go Global" strategies, more and more Chinese cultures are being exposed to the world. To make foreign friends have a better understanding of the Chinese folk culture, more and more translators begin to translate Chinese folk culture into English.

The author has collected some of the translations of Guangxi festival names, thus making a classification summary. This paper endeavors to study, based on the predecessor, which translation strategies translators should adopt when translating the names of Guangxi festivals. The research findings are as follows: first, in the process of translation, the main translation methods are literal translation, literal translation annotation, free translation, transliteration, and transliteration annotation. Other translation strategies, with the exception of free translation, belong to the foreignization translation strategy. Second, most transliteration methods of festival names are translated into Chinese from local dialects. Through the study of the translation of festival names in Guangxi, this paper concludes that the foreignization translation strategy is mainly adopted for the cultural words with festival characteristics. When there is a huge cultural difference between the original text and the target text, translators often adopt domestication strategies to preserve the cultural connotation so that readers can accept the target text.

Keywords: folk culture; festival name; translation strategy; foreignization; culture-loaded words

INTRODUCTION

With more than 5,000 years of civilization, the Chinese nation has created an extensive and profound Chinese culture. The traditional festival is one of the Chinese

cultures formed throughout the long age. Festivals formed in history are the historical accumulation of excellent Chinese culture, so festival culture contains rich historical and cultural knowledge.

In recent years, our government has attached great importance to the protection of intangible cultural heritage, and the traditional festivals have also received attention. As an important part of the cultural field, traditional festivals have a profound historical and cultural background; and they are closely related to the general public's lives and receive special care from citizens. Tian, Shi, and Luo (2014:5) argue that the festivals bear their common memories and represent their spirits, characters, and identities. Therefore, Guangxi festivals also carry the national culture and the national spirit. China has witnessed the continuous improvement of its economy as well as the improvement of China's international status, then the communication of culture has become more frequent. Therefore, more and more translators have started to translate festival cultures of Guangxi into English. However, translating those words into another language is a real challenge. Due to great cultural differences between the East and the West, translators need to adopt certain translation strategies to overcome cultural barriers. Since the study of festival names in Guangxi is rarely done, this paper opens a new way to analyze them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Festival culture is an important part of folklore culture load word. Liao (2000: 232) says that culture-loaded vocabulary refers to the words, phrases, and idioms that mark specific things in culture. According to the author, culture-loaded vocabulary refers to words, phrases, and idioms that denote distinct cultural elements. These words describe the distinct activities of some ethnic groups that have developed over time and are distinct from those of other ethnic groups. Due to "Go Global" strategies, more people have been paying attention to folk culture translation in recent years. On the CNKI, there are a number of papers concerning Chinese folk culture translation. Nida (2001:157) points out that if you desire to know the meaning of content, the real clues to meaning depend on context. Since then, the context has been highly significant for translating one culture to another. Jiang (2007) also insists on combining context, then she cites examples about northerner's bed and southerner's bed to illustrate her opinion. Suan and Shi (2019) discuss translation strategies and principles from cultural consciousness. They advocate the purpose of "seeking common ground while putting aside differences". So, translators should know more about their own traditional culture and respect and appreciate different cultures to establish a high degree of cultural consciousness. From the study on the C-E translation of folk-loaded cultural words, the author realizes that folk culture is a kind of culture that contains rich history and knowledge, so it exists vocabulary vacancy. It is challenging to find an equivalence between the source language and target language. So, the author needs to study it further.

Liao (2000: 232-233) argues that each nation has its cultural focus. If the focus of cultures is similar, then semantic correspondence and crossover between words of different languages are common. On the contrary, the difficulty of the translation will be greatly increased. In some cases, the translators only grasp the superficial meaning of a festival and do not possess a comprehensive understanding of the festival, which can lead to inappropriate translation methodologies in the translation process and ultimately result in failure of the cultural transmission process. There is just a little research about the translation of Guangxi folk culture words on CNKI, and even less on the translation of Guangxi festivals. Yang and Liu (2013) argue that complementation does not form systematic and organized translation materials of folk culture, so foreign readers are unable to understand the whole meaning of folk culture. One of the reasons is that there is a serious shortage of translation talents in the border areas of Guangxi, which is unable to organize large-scale translation activities of folk culture. The translator should endeavor to overcome those problems and promote communication between China and other countries.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The philosopher of German F. Schleiermacher put forward two translation strategies, one of which is called foreignization, “the translator leaves the author in peace as much as possible, and moves the reader toward him” (Venuti,1995:20). In translation, a translator must be familiar with the language characteristics of foreign cultures, absorb foreign expressions, and use expressions that correspond to the source language used by the author to convey the content of the original text. In other words, the purpose of using a foreignization strategy to turn the target language into the destination is to consider national culture differences. The other is “the translator leaves the reader in peace as much as possible, and moves the author toward him” (Venuti,1995:20). Domestication is transparent. It uses the target language or target readers as the destination and conveys the original text’s content in a way that the target audience is familiar with. The translator must translate like the native author, and the original author must become fluent in the native language in order to have a direct dialogue with the readers. Domestication translation can improve the readability and appreciation of a translation by assisting readers in comprehending it. American translation theorist Venuti inherited Schleiermacher’s view. Foreignization is not a word selection strategy, but a moral and ethical attitude towards foreign culture expressed in the translation. It is an absolute misunderstanding to equate domestication and foreignization with literal translation and free translation. Some cannot distinguish between foreignization and literal translation. Li (2004) regards the strategy of foreignization as equivalent to literal translation. The literal translation is based on the superficial meaning of a noun and the selection of the corresponding noun in English for word translation, which mainly emphasizes being faithful to the word’s original

meaning. Free translation is to combine the main sememe into a concise set of translation words.

Venuti (2008:19) claims that the terms “domestication” and “foreignization” do not establish a neat binary opposition that can simply be superimposed on “fluent” or “resistant” discursive strategies, nor can these two sets of terms be reduced to the true binaries that have proliferated in the history of translation commentary. Although translators may encounter the contradiction of domestication and foreignization during the translation process, the two translation techniques are not mutually exclusive. There is no difference between foreignization and domestication, but translators choose different strategies driven by different purposes. In a sense, these two strategies complement each other rather than conflict with each other, and the choice of translation strategies is influenced and restricted by the purpose of the translation. In a word, teleology is a breakthrough in the study of translation theory. Translators’ translation practices are influenced by teleology, which is centered on readers. Domestication and foreignization are two different translation processes that are not mutually exclusive. Their focus differs, but they both strive to help target language readers comprehend the source language’s meaning. Our research is focused on translating festival names in Guangxi, and the names of Guangxi’s festivals exhibit distinct national characteristics. The use of foreignization translation is recommended in order to preserve the cultural meanings

CASE ANALYSIS

The author collected a large number of translations of Guangxi festival folk customs, and found that translators mainly use literal translation, literal translation plus annotation, transliteration, transliteration plus annotation, and free translation.

LITERAL TRANSLATION

The literal translation is based on the surface meaning of the noun and the selection of the corresponding noun in English for word translation, mainly emphasizing the faithful to the original meaning of folk vocabulary. For example, in *Encounter Chinese Festival Culture* (Li et al., 2019), “中秋节” (Zhong Qiujie) was translated into Mid-Autumn Festival.

Here is an example of a festival in Guangxi adopting literal translation. “牛魂节” (Niu Hunjie) is a traditional festival of the Mulao nationality and the Zhuang nationality, which was established to honor their god. It is translated as “Ox-soul Festival” or “Ox-spirit festival”. “Ox” means castration, especially in the past (Hornby, 2018:1526). However, the original intention of this festival is to praise and reward the merits of bull, to show bull respect, so it is not suitable to use “Ox” in translating this festival. Thus, the “spirit” is defined as a separate entity from the body and is thought to live on after death; “soul” means the spiritual part of “牛”(Hornby, 2018:2058). “牛魂节” is also translated as “Cattle Soul Festival”. “Cattle” refers to the general name of the group of

“牛” (Niu) (Hornby, 2018:321), but the bull here is only one, so the word “Cattle” is not appropriate to translate this festival. Besides, this festival was translated as Cow-soul Festival. “Cow” means a large animal kept on farms to produce milk or beef, which means the female (Hornby, 2018:491). This is even more inappropriate. In addition, this festival is also translated into “Bull Soul Festival”, where “Bull” refers to the male bull, which has a heroic or magnificent external image (Hornby, 2018:270). The translation of the word “bull soul” can achieve the role of cultural transmission, conveying the cultural value and connotation of the Bull Soul Festival. Literal translation can set up the positive folk culture image in language transmission and convey the cultural value and connotation of the festival. There is a similar translation about it. That is “三月三” (San Yuesan), which was translated in *Encounter Chinese Festival Culture* (Li et al., 2019). And it is the day of the Zhuang people going to worship their ancestors. Zhuang people have to take prepared offerings to the graves of ancestors to set up offerings. Some people translated “三月三” as “The third Day of The third month of The lunar Calendar”. Another translation is “The Zhuang Nationality March on Third”. It was added “Zhuang Nationality” in front of it, showing that it is the unique festival of Zhuang Nationality. “扫墓” (Sao Mu) is the main event on this day. Sometimes, it was translated into Tomb Sweeping. “Sweep” means clean, to remove something from a surface (Hornby, 2018:2183), which cannot represent the respect of our ancestors. This activity is a kind of worship, and the ancestors wish us a good harvest in the coming year. The “五色糯米饭”(Wuse Nuomifan) is the most indispensable food in this day. It is a kind of rice cooked by every family at Zhuang Nationality March on Third every year; it is mainly used for ancestor worship and is regarded as a symbol of good luck and good harvest. This kind of food is integrated with ancestor worship and good entertainment, full of national and local tastes. It was translated into Multicolored glutinous rice in *The Festival of March the Third* (Tian, Shi & Luo 2019). It was translated as the five-colored glutinous rice. “Multicolored” means a variety of colors (Hornby, 2018:1407), but “五色糯米饭” is well-known for its five colors. In this regard, the author believes that “The five-colored glutinous rice” would be a better translation.

LITERAL TRANSLATION PLUS ANNOTATION

Literal translation plus annotation means a literal translation of a text with explanatory notes. Notes can be long or short, either textual or footnote, or a combination of both.

Although some Chinese culture-loaded words do not have distinct national cultural images, they contain various conceptual meanings. These meanings have no corresponding explanation and explanation in a specific context. Due to the limitation of the grammatical structure of the target language, the translator can't reproduce all meanings in concise language. In this case, translators often adopt the method of literal translation plus annotation.

Take “炮龙节”¹ (Pao Longjie) for example, it was translated into “Firecracker Dragon Festival”, or “Firecracker Loong Festival”. In the western concept, the concrete appearance of the dragon is a fierce, terrible creature, which represents the devil and evil. Hornby(2018) says the definition of “dragon” in the Oxford Advanced English-Chinese Dictionary is “a large fierce animal with wings and a long tail, that can breathe out the fire”. This is in stark contrast to the majesty and power of China. “龙” has a sublime status in Chinese people’s minds. Chinese people maintain that “龙” symbolizes glorious, which expresses desire and expectations for life. Therefore, the author suggests that the “炮龙节” is more suitable to be translated into “Firecracker Loong Festival”, which is more conducive to increasing Chinese international recognition. However, the literal translation may make foreign readers think “炮龙节” may only be related to fireworks. Therefore, while reaching foreignization, annotations should be added to explain the main origin and activities of the “炮龙节”, so that readers will not feel exhausted when reading.

What is more, “歌圩”² (Ge Xu) is a traditional festival in lunar March, about singing. There have been a variety of singing parties held since ancient times. From the seventh to the ninth day of the third month of the lunar calendar, “歌圩” is one of the indispensable activities in the Zhuang Culture, and Tourism Festival will be held in Tianyang each year. Then people from different places come to Ganzhuang Mountain to sing folk songs. Several singers sat on the grass, others stood under the trees or at the foot of the mountain, and others sat along the roadside. This activity was translated “歌圩” as “Song Fairs” or “Singing Festival”. Fairs are entertainment in a field where people can ride on large machines and play games to win prizes (Hornby, 2018:767). Singing means the activity of making musical sounds with your voice Hornby, 2018:2004). “圩” means market, so the meaning of fairs can better express these words. However, if we just translated Song Fairs; it is difficult for foreign readers to understand what that means. So, adding annotations to explain what the word stands for is needed. Thus, the purpose of cultural transmission can be realized. The translation of “山歌” (Shan Ge) is a mountain song. The origin of “山歌” is that youth sat on the mountain singing to the opposite, so “mountain song” can express the meaning of “山歌”.

TRANSLITERATION

Transliteration refers to the method by which the word symbols of one language are expressed with the same or similar words in another language. For the translation of some folk culture words, it is difficult to find equivalent words in English. Transliteration is mainly used for the translation of words with special colors, such as, “qipao”, “Yin-Yang” and “kungfu” and so on. In all the festivals collected by the author, some culture-loaded words were transliterated from Chinese by dialects. For example,

¹ Bingyang people have special feelings about firecrackers, and believe that firecrackers represent “red fire and good fortune”.

² Song Fairs is not only a place for Zhuang people to carry out cultural and recreational activities but also a place for unmarried young people to sing and talk about love.

霜降节(Shuang Jiangjie), 蚂拐节(Ma Guaijie), 芒那节(Mang Najie) and 达努节(Da nujie).“霜降节”(Shuang Jiangjie) is a vital festival in Guangxi, usually celebrated around October 23. Local people are no less enthusiastic about the festival than the Spring Festival. It is said that “霜降节” originated from rice farming in the Zhuang people. It is a form of celebrating the harvest and expressing good wishes for a good harvest in the coming year. This festival was translated into the Frost’s Descent Festival. There is a saying about the origin of this festival. There was at the time of Frost’s descent that a female general rode an ox to battle and returned victoriously. The posterity called her “乜娅莫”(Mie Yamo). “乜娅”(Mie Ya) is the Zhuang people’s name for the old woman, and “莫”(Mo) means yellow ox, which is Zhuang dialect. This festival has been divided into “头降”(Tou Jiang), “中降”(Zhong Jiang) and “收降”(Shou Jiang). “中降” is the most important day in this festival, In this days, the local people use the new sticky rice to make “糍粑”(Ci Ba), a kind of snack to worship “乜娅莫” and prepare for entertaining their friends. So the author maintains that Shuangjiang Festival is more suitable than the Frost’s Descent Festival. If it was translated into the Frost’s Descent Festival, foreigners might think that this festival is found to celebrate the frost and the connotation of this festival can be lost.

Chinese Lunar New Year, known as the “Spring Festival” (春节) is the most significant traditional Chinese festival when all family members get together and have lots of long-rooted celebrations. There are plenty of customs during this festival. It is customary to make “饺子”(Jiao Zi) after dinner to eat around midnight in northern China. According to Chinese culture, it is common to put a coin or Chinese date in some of it. Whoever gets these will supposedly have good luck in the coming year. Most people translate “饺子” as “dumpling”. In the ancient time, “饺子” was homophonic of “交子”, and “交子”(Jiao Zi) was the currency. Therefore, the meaning of “jiaozi” is extremely rich, so the author holds the idea that “jiaozi” is more suitable than a dumpling.” In the south, however, it is customary to make “年糕”(Nian Gao), which was translated as “glutinous New Year cake” or “Niangao”. “年糕” has a long history of thousands of years in our country, and it is an important part of Chinese cooked culture. And “年糕” has a similar pronunciation with “年高”(Nian Gao), which means people can have an improvement in work or study after eating it. This nice bailment is ongoing, whether men or women, old or young, usually eat “年糕” in the Spring Festival, for they expect that everything is smooth in this year. “粽子”(Zong Zi) is also an indispensable part of the traditional cooking culture in Guangxi. Translators translate it as “sticky rice dumpling” or “zongzi”. The author maintains that “zongzi” is better than “sticky rice dumpling”. The reason why author think so is that “粽子” has an implied meaning of good luck, and it means successful. Besides, “粽子” means “高粽”(Gao Zong) since the acient time, it means students can be top scorers in the exam. Dumpling means something made by a mix of flour, which cannot perfectly express the meaning of “粽子”.

TRANSLITERATION PLUS ANNOTATION

Foreignization translation can keep the national characteristics of culture and help people understand the national culture. Transliteration is the best way to retain the original text, but it is so pity that some transliteration of words is so difficult to understand, so it is better to add some annotations appropriately. Transliteration plus annotation refers to transliteration with explanatory notes. Notes can be long or short, text notes, footnotes, or a combination of both.

Taking “蚂拐节”³(Ma Guaijie) as an example, the Zhuang nationality's unique sacrificial festival custom embodies the connotation of faith and reverence for life. The frog is called Maguai in the local Guiliu dialect, so it is translated into the Frog Festival or Maguai Festival in The Maguai Festival of the Zhuang People. As Wei, Bao, and Wei (2020) say, Maguai is different from other frog species. It grows in the river. When paddy is planted each year, Maguai leaps from the river to the terraces along the banks, and when the paddy is fully grown, it leaps back into the river from the paddy fields. People gradually know how to judge the weather by its breath and sound. So, the author maintains that Maguai can express what it means to the Zhuang people. Unfortunately, foreign readers are unable to comprehend the meaning of Maguai, so translators should provide an annotation to clarify what the word means.

“芒那节”⁴ (Mang Najie) is a festival to worship the god of field. “那” is a homophone of “田” in the Zhuang language. The activities on this day are to pray for rain and worship the farm tools. The origin of this celebration is said to be due to a flood washing away all the food. The farmer consulted the sparrow, and then the sparrow consulted “娅王”(Ya Wang), who gave the sparrow a belt of seeds and taught them how to use them. That year the rice harvest, she made great contributions to the rice production of the people, so she was worshiped by the people. Since then, “娅王” has become the god of rice. The author considers that the translation of the Mangna Festival is extremely appropriate for it as it conveys the true meaning of the festival. But translators must add annotation so that target language readers can fully comprehend.

³ It is said that Maguai is the daughter of the King of Thunder, in charge of the rain, so that the earth is in good weather. One year there was a young man named Donglin in the Zhuang family, who was suffering from the loss of his mother. He heard the Maguai outside the house “croak and croak” incessantly, a moment of irritation, he used hot water to pour the frogs. From then on, the Maguai stopped chirping and the sky never rained again. The world began to be in great trouble. Donglin was frightened, went to beg the god ancestor Buluo camel river goddess mother sister Luojia, get divine instructions should apologize to the frog goddess. So Donglin rushed on the first day of the New Year to beat up the bronze drum, invite the Maguai goddess to return to the village for the New Year, and invited a thousand people to bury the dead Maguai. Later, the earth was blessed by the frog goddess again, and the wind and rain were smooth. Since then, the Zhuang people in Donglan, Bama, have to celebrate the festival of the frog and worship the Maguai every year.

⁴ It was said that the god of rice-娅王 must be worshipped, otherwise the rice will be empty and not “hooked” to the ears after ten days. Therefore, the festival is a very important festival in the region, as it holds the expectation of farmers for a good harvest.

FREE TRANSLATION

Free translation means changing the figures of speech, sentence structures or patterns of the original works, but not the original meaning. The advantage of free translation is that it does not dwell on the word or syntax. Instead, it focuses on the original text's deep meaning and cultural connotation. Free translation is often adopted when there is a huge cultural difference between the original and target texts. For example, “百家宴”(Bai Jiayan) is a special diet custom in the Dong group. This activity is one-of-a-kind and historic traditional folk culture that evolved from the original do Chun Fu, a communal praying ceremony. And this is the highest level of Dong etiquette. On this day, the area residents sip reunion wine together, sing and drink joyfully, and joyously enjoy exquisite food. Its aim dates back to ancient times when it was used to gather relatives and business associates to pray for a prosperous crop and peace. As a result, “public dinner” is an adequate translation.

CONCLUSION

MAJOR FINDINGS

This paper draws the following conclusions through the study of Guangxi festival culture translation strategies. First of all, the first finding is that foreignization is mainly adopted for the cultural words with festival characteristics, and domestication is occasionally applied in the translation of festival names. And the main translation methods are literal translation, literal translation annotation, free translation, transliteration, and transliteration annotation. The translation strategies, with the exception of free translation, belong to the foreignization translation strategy. Second, most transliteration methods of festival names are translated into Chinese from local dialects. Foreignization strategies can convey the exotic cultural characteristics of the original work, promoting Chinese culture to go abroad. Cultural words show the core of traditional Chinese culture. However, translators should be careful in selecting translation methods and strategies when dealing with cultural terms. The paper mainly adopts the foreignization translation strategy to spread the culture entirely. Foreignization strategies can convey the regional cultural characteristics of the source language significantly, provide the target language readers with the original Chinese culture, and promote cross-cultural communication. Secondly, cultural diversity has a certain impact on our translation activities. It is necessary for translators to be proficient in the source language and target language and fully proficient in the differences between Chinese and Western values. Improving the quality of culture-loaded words translation promotes understanding Chinese culture and then achieves cultural exchange. Both domestication and foreignization translation strategies have their

advantages. Translators should analyze the specific problems in one particular way. In translation, translators often adopt domestication strategies when there is a huge cultural difference between the original text and the target text to preserve the cultural connotation so the readers can accept the target texts.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Due to the historical nature of Chinese culture and the complexity of cultural words, there will be deviations in the translation process. In addition, there are too few words studied in this paper. However, this does not mean that the festivals translated from dialects can only use the transliteration method. More studies should be carried out to translate cultural words better. Besides, the author only analyzes several festivals due to the limited time and energy. The writer needs to study more words to identify whether domestication can be used to translate cultural words.

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