

On Translation of Sichuan Opera from the Perspective of External Communication -- a Case Study of the Gold

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Keywords: Sichuan opera, External communication, Culture-loaded words

Abstract: The distinctive features of Sichuan local conditions and customs have created its unique regional culture. As one of the carriers of these cultural manifestations, Sichuan opera vividly shows the public image and social style of this region. And such a cultural treasure deserves to be put on the world stage for all peoples to appreciate. Based on this background, this paper starts from the current situation of external communication of Sichuan opera, explains its characteristics and common problems during external communication. Simultaneously, this paper analyzes the processing of Sichuan opera translation at the lexical level and syntactic level respectively, and makes a detailed analysis of Sichuan opera script translation with emphasis on the relevant translation strategies. Through a series of analysis, this paper summarizes the common translation strategies for the Sichuan opera, so as to find a new direction for external communication of Sichuan opera. In this way, the influence of Bashu culture in the world will be enhanced, and the inheritance and development of Sichuan opera in China will be realized accordingly.

1. Introduction

Sichuan opera is a rich and unique form of performance in the Bashu area (two ancient cities in Sichuan), which can directly and appropriately reflect the social customs, humanities and cultural features here. In order to integrate into the ranks of global development, many excellent Sichuan opera works have been spread overseas through scripts or stages, hoping to achieve the purpose of regional economic prosperity by spreading local culture, that is, promoting communication and development with local culture. And it is undeniable that this also is a significant process to promote the dissemination and development of culture. Currently, there are not many scripts translated from Sichuan opera in China. The translations of *Love Under the Willows*, *Rolling Lights* and *The Gold* account for a certain proportion in the number of Sichuan opera translations. Among them, there are relatively more studies on the first two works, and most of them are presented in the form of comparative analysis of translations, meanwhile, there is also accompanied by thorough research and discussion on translation strategies and techniques. In addition, scholars and translators such as Gao Shanhu and Jin Xueqin have also studied the external communication of Sichuan opera and conveyed its charm to foreign countries in this process. On the basis of these studies, people can deepen their understanding of Sichuan opera, enhance the global recognition of the Bashu culture, and promote the spread and development of this culture worldwide.

2. A Brief Introduction to Sichuan Opera

2.1 Characteristics of Sichuan Opera

“Plum is less white than snow, but snow is less fragrant than plum.” Different things have their own merits, so do opera scripts. Different operas have their own peculiarity, and Sichuan opera is one of the unique opera categories. Regional cultural uniqueness makes Sichuan opera bear the weight of intense opera characteristics, and carries a relatively strong cultural characteristic. Therefore, in the process of promoting the external dissemination of this opera, translators ought to take the initiative to consider this unique literariness, so that the translation does not lose the cultural characteristics of the Bashu region. However, it is worth noting that the output content can retain local characteristics, but it should also take into account the acceptance degree of the audiences, and innovative communication is required during this process. In the first place, innovative inheritance refers to the re-interpretation and re-creation of the content of the traditional opera and story of Sichuan opera [1]. On the basis of trying to restore the original feature of the story, through the innovation of theatrical performance form and stage effect, it assists the spread of Sichuan opera culture to the outside world more smoothly. Generally speaking, Sichuan opera also has the characteristics of prominent content purport. This opera was created in ancient China, when people’s living standards were uneven. Some used the singing and performance of Sichuan opera to perceive life, highlighting the beauty of human nature or the greatness of love. There were also some oppressed people who used the form of opera to express their inner frustrations and dissatisfaction, denouncing the injustice of the society and the decadence of feudal politics. For example, the *Love Under the Willows* is a story in Sichuan opera, and the hero and heroine were originally in love with each other, however, due to the shackles of feudal ethics and the obstacles of parents, they could only end up in death to maintain pure love. The story not only criticizes the feudal thought of “Make match by parents’ order and match-maker’s word.”, but also eulogizes the touching love between the two people until their deaths. In addition, the way to treat the Sichuan opera dialect is another major feature of this opera. Due to the characteristics of regional development in Sichuan opera, this opera scripts are often expressed in Sichuan dialect. In order to convey the specific meaning of dialect, it is necessary to go through the two steps of transforming dialect into mandarin and then translating mandarin into English. Such as the word of “bǎi lóng mén zhèn (the Sichuan dialect)”, firstly, translators need to know that the word is not a tactical deployment of troops such as “eight-diagram-shaped appetizer”, but a pure meaning of chatting. On the basis of understanding, it can be simply translated as “chat with other people”. Therefore, translators need to understand the expression habits of Sichuan dialect before translation, and translators should also increase the intake of Sichuan dialect, because good absorption will have more accurate translation output. Finally, the professionalism of Sichuan opera translation itself still deserves more attention from all sectors of society. Sichuan opera is a corner of Chinese opera, so it has dense expressive habits with Chinese characteristics and cultural tone. Thus, in order to highlight the professional level of this opera translation, translators need to enrich the accumulation of both Chinese and English, and pay more attention to the integrity of English communication, at the same time, the timely expansion of Chinese knowledge is also need to be noticed, so as to ensure the accuracy of Sichuan opera scripts.

2.2 Significance of External Communication of Sichuan Opera

The script of Sichuan opera is of great literary, prestigious in Chinese opera and literary circles, and its literary heritage is supported by the long-standing and colorful Bashu culture [2]. As the embodiment of Bashu culture, the Sichuan opera reflects the living conditions of the people in this

region, and bears the social customs and spiritual outlook here, therefore, the translation of Sichuan opera is of great benefit to its own development. In the first place, for the cultural transmission, the combination of excellent translators and representative Sichuan opera scripts can pave a broader way for the dissemination of featuring Bashu culture, which is also an effective way to enhance its cultural influences. With the expansion of cultural influence, there are also considerable economic benefits. In China's socialistic modernization, economic construction and cultural construction are closely interrelated. Economy is the basis, and culture is the reflection of economy, meanwhile, it can play a huge role in promoting economic development. Therefore, relying on the external communication of characteristic regional culture, it can attract more international friends to have strong interest in the characteristic products of Bashu region, so as to promote the sustainable development of regional economy.

2.3 Existing Challenges of External Communication of Sichuan Opera

There are many kinds of Chinese opera, and Sichuan opera is one of them with strong regional and cultural characteristics. As a valuable intangible cultural heritage in China, the charm of Sichuan opera deserves to be appreciated by people all over the world. However, due to the differences in cultural backgrounds of different countries, the cross-cultural communication of this opera is facing great challenges. The specific performance are as follows, the origin of Sichuan opera can be traced back to the pre-Qin period or even earlier time, and its cultural background is tinged with feudalism in ancient China, meanwhile, the practical significance conveyed by it is abundant and profound. This special cultural background is an indescribable obstacle for the rest of the world to understand. Secondly, regional dialects are commonly used in Sichuan opera for daily communication. Originally, dialect is the pearl of culture, but it is difficult to understand in foreign language environment because of its variety in expressions and rich meanings. The external translation and communication of Sichuan opera is relatively simple [3]. When it comes to the Sichuan opera culture, the most obvious skills to think of are face change and fire breathing, which make people's understanding about Sichuan opera easy to be shaped by its appearance, and then neglect its connotation. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that different audiences at home and abroad have different reactions to this opera. Derived from different mindset, obvious differences exist in language expression habits between China and other countries. Therefore, the feeling of the opera or its script is very different. Only by overcoming these challenges in the process of external communication can Sichuan opera achieve the depth and breadth of external communication.

3. Translation of Sichuan Opera

3.1 Translation Strategies of Sichuan Opera

Translation is a process by which the chain of signifiers that constitutes the source-language text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the target language which the translator provides the strength of an interpretation [4]. Therefore, translators can reproduce the source language of Sichuan opera translations through appropriate translation strategies. However, due to the unique literariness and development history of Sichuan opera, the external translation of this opera should not only retain its own cultural characteristics, but also take into account the audience's understanding level to different cultures. In a general way, the single domestication translation strategy will weaken the dialect characteristics in Sichuan opera translation, which is not conducive to protecting its cultural characteristics. The single foreignization translation strategy increases the difficulty for overseas audiences to understand the opera's connotation, which is not conducive for overseas promotion of Sichuan opera. In order to achieve a balance between the two, translators will often use

domestication and foreignization translation strategies to present good translation quality according to different contexts and expression effects during the translation process. In this process, literal translation and free translation are also important translation strategies that cannot be ignored.

3.1.1 Translation Strategies of Culture Loaded Words

The Bashu culture has a long history. As early as the Shang Dynasty, the people of Shu started cultural exchanges with the ethnic groups in the Yellow River basin. Sanxingdui Ruins Site and The Jinsha Site both reflect the long and age-old civilization here. The accumulation of civilization enriches the spiritual world, and the inheritance of culture accumulates historical deposits. The culture-loaded words in Sichuan opera have left a deep regional imprint on the civilization accumulation and cultural inheritance of Bashu region. These words reflect the unique activities accumulated by each ethnic group in the long history, which are also different from other ethnic groups. As a diminutive cultural silhouette in these scripts with local cultural colors, the translation and transmission of these culture-loaded words can inadvertently reflect the unique charm of Bashu civilization and express the accumulated historical civilization with these minor words.

When it comes to the common expressions of Sichuan opera, there are many culture-loaded words with classical Sichuan opera characteristics such as “biàn liǎn”, “kāi liǎn”, “gǔn dēng”, “tǔ huǒ”. When translating these words, translators should use appropriate translation strategies to preserve the charm of Sichuan opera, but also let the audiences understand its meaning. For example, painting a facial makeup is called “kāi liǎn” in Sichuan opera terminology. There are usually two translation types of “kāi liǎn” : 1. Kailian, 2. painting face. The first translation retains the expression of this culture-loaded word, that is, transliteration of this Chinese word directly. The latter expounds the meaning of “kāi liǎn”, that is, using free translation. Free translation (liberal/free translation) is characterized by the use of escaping techniques in the processing of lexical meaning and rhetoric (such as metaphors) in order to reproduce the meaning of the original text smoothly and authentically [5]. Therefore, translators often choose the translation strategy of free translation to reproduce the connotation of the source text. Actually, there are also some words which are translated by either method. For example, “tí pá rén” is transliterated directly as Ti Paren, instead of translating it according to its meaning - “Refers to someone who is limp”. For another example, “cáng dāo” is translated into knife-hiding, and “tǔ huǒ” is translated into fire-spitting, and these two words are descriptive translations of word behaviors according to the basic meaning of the words.

Whether transliteration or free translation, the root cause is to effectively deal with the translation of culture-loaded words in Sichuan opera. When translating these culture-loaded words, the translator should not only retain the cultural characteristics of his own nation, but also try his best to fit the understanding level of the audience, so that he can directly use culture-loaded words as a starting point to spread the charm of regional culture.

3.1.2 Translation Strategies of the Gold

Sichuan opera *The Gold* is a large-scale opera created by Long Xueyi, the winner of Cao Yu Opera Award and literary director of Chongqing Sichuan Theatre. *The Gold* is adapted from Cao Yu’s opera classic *The Wilderness*, which is praised as the “pinnacle of work” in Sichuan opera. As a work of many poetic languages, how can *The Gold* not only express the charm of these languages, but also take into account the acceptance degree of the audiences? This is both a responsibility and a test for the translators. In the subtitle translation of the play script *The Gold*, the translator skillfully used domestication and foreignization to present a vivid translation. In a segment of the meeting between the hero and heroine Qiu Hu and Jin Zi, the two respond to each other through

symmetrical language and express their missing for each other with vivid descriptions:

Woman: fēn bié hòu, xīn rú shuāng dǎ lěng jìn jìn.

Man: shí nián lái, xīn rú xuě yā zhòng chén chén.

W: jiàn dào nǐ, xīn rú qīng chén è mèng xǐng.

M: shí nián lái, xīn rú shān quán xiǎng zhēng zhēng.

(These are excerpts from Sichuan opera *The Gold*.)

W: After our separation, my heart turned cold as if under foot.

M: For the last ten years, my heart has been heavy like a rock.

W: Seeing you feels like waking up from a nightmare in the morning.

M: These days my heart flows like a mountain spring.

In the first two lines of dialogue, the ending is in the form of a refrain to emphasize the depth of the emotion being expressed. Therefore, the translator did not directly translate the descriptions of “shuāng dǎ” and “xuě yā” in the source language, instead, on the basis of expressing specific emotions, the foreignization translation strategy was used to translate “shuāng dǎ lěng jìn jìn” into “cold as if under foot”, which was more in line with the Chinese situation, and to a corresponding degree, “xuě yā zhòng chén chén” was translated into “heavy like a rock”. In this way, the audiences can feel the suppression of their love from the dialogue by expressing their feelings of being extremely cold and oppressed. The last two sentences reflect the mood of the two people who have not seen each other for many years. Here, the translator did not only continue to use the foreignization translation strategy, but respectively adopted the translation strategies of domestication and foreignization: Firstly, the translator directly translated “qīng chén è mèng xǐng” into “waking up from a nightmare in the morning”, and later, according to the meaning of “shān quán xiǎng zhēng zhēng” itself, the source language was translated as “flows like a mountain spring”. This translation process not only uses the culture and language of the target language to reproduce the meaning of the source language in the play, but also tries to maintain the characteristics of the source language in the process, so as to achieve the effect of balancing the use of corresponding translation strategies.

3.2 Translation Methods of Sichuan Opera

The difference in cultural background makes it necessary to use certain translation methods and techniques to ensure the accuracy of the translation in addition to choosing the right translation strategies in the process of translating different languages into the target language. And in the process of external translation of Sichuan opera, there are some translation methods commonly used, such as addition and deletion, inversion, linear translation and so on. Through these appropriate translation methods, the translator can often present a more accurate translation. And the translation methods adopted for *The Gold* are referred to.

Firstly, in the method of addition, in order to make the translation faithfully express the meaning and style of the source text and make the translation conform to the expressive habits of the source text, some essential words must be added in rhetoric, grammatical structure, semantics or tone. Such as in the Sichuan opera *The Gold*, the line “biàn nǚ rén, hǎo fēng qíng” could have been handled as “turn back into a woman with tenderness”, but here, the translator added the subject “her” after “turn”, and added “Love” to the beginning of the sentence, thereby, the complete expression of the sentence became “Love turned her back into a woman and made her possess a graceful style”. Such translation processing mode can highlight the logicity of the sentence, and conform to the emotional background of the source language, at the same time, it can reflect the love and affection between the hero and heroine. The translation method of addition is a common translation method,

but the method of deletion also often attracts the translator's attention in the application of translation methods. For instance, in the line of “zhěn biān sāi biān xīn huā lèi huā, huān xiào tián xiào xiào dé zhēn”, the translator used the method of deletion to translate it as “Cheek to cheek we share joy and tears of laughter”, on the basis of accurately expressing the source language, the words “zhěn biān”, “xīn huā”, “lèi huā” were omitted thoughtfully by the translator, thus making the sentence more concise and expressive. Therefore, proper word addition and deletion processing on the source text can make the translation more clear and more coherent. Regardless of whether it is an additional translation or a provincial translation, its root lies in the fluency and fidelity of the translation. On this basis, it would be better to be able to convey the rhythm of the source text!

Except for the translation methods of addition and deletion, the translation methods of inversion and linear translation are also frequently used in sentence translation and processing. In the script, “máng máng yuán yě qiū cǎo lěng”, “yí yè qiū yǔ lǜ yòu shēng” were respectively translated into “Autumn grass turns cold in the vast wilderness” and “A night of autumn rain brings new green growth”. The first line is the expression in accordance with the English word order, the translator used the translation method of inversion to translate “qiū cǎo lěng” for the first, and on such foundation, the translator continued to translate the adjusted word order “máng máng yuán yě” into “in the vast wilderness”. While the translation of the second sentence used the translation method of linear translation to translate the sentence, which visually showed the logic of the source sentence.

Script translation is not a simple decoding and rearrangement of the text, but taking the initiative to convey the tone of civilization, promote mutual cultural exchanges and reflect cultural features. Hence, in the process of language conversion, the translator cannot change the basic features of language only from the level of words, nor can he simply pay attention to the coherence of sentences. Instead, the language should be analyzed and understood in combination with their different cultural backgrounds, and then expressed them through language suitable for context cohesion and accord with cultural characteristics. Sichuan opera is a gift from Chinese history and culture, so the translator should not only take the initiative to accept and understand the gift, but also follow corresponding translation principles, through using reasonable and appropriate translation methods to explore the richer inner world of this opera and convey its spiritual connotation with the power of language. In this way, the translator can help the culture to gain more attention from the world, thus promoting its international development, and then help the culture to a broader world stage.

4. Suggestion for External Communication of Sichuan Opera

The details of opera reflect cultural accumulation, which originates from time-honored history and civilization. Sichuan opera is one of the carriers of culture in southwest China. And finding a proper road for this opera to spread abroad is an effective way to expand the influence of BaShu culture in Chinese civilization. However, if there are situations such as unclear positioning and inadequate development within the nation, the “going out” of Chinese culture will also face some difficulties.

4.1 Difficulties and Brightness of Sichuan Opera Translation

Sichuan opera is one of the regional cultures with Chinese characteristics, and its foreign translation is more or less limited by some elements, such as regional development and audience's cognitive level. The degree of regional development has different influences on culture, and the different cultural backgrounds it breeds will form cognitive differences. Moreover, the publicity of Sichuan opera itself is not sufficient, so it also lacks certain influences in China. At the same time,

from the amount of translation materials in Sichuan opera, there are not many Sichuan opera versions. Due to its strong literariness, the translator does not have a better command of the artistic techniques in this opera, so it is difficult for the translator to convey the charm of Sichuan opera on the basis of taking into account both Chinese and English cultural background and expression habits. In view of the understanding disorders brought by the professionalism of Sichuan opera translation to the translators who do not know this opera, the ideal state of translation is the co-translation by the translator and the artist [6]. In addition, foreigners have different attitudes towards the acceptance of Chinese culture. Although the external translation of Sichuan opera is faced with many difficulties, it is not hard to see that this opera is gradually increasing the rate of appearance on the world stage. According to a data, as early as 1959, Sichuan opera troupes visited Eastern Europe and gave 69 performances here, indicating that Sichuan opera spread to the outside world relatively early. However, due to the relatively simple form of communication, it did not occupy a more favorable position on the international stage at that time. But now, the external communication situation of this opera is gradually clear. Sichuan University international students took the initiative to learn Sichuan opera, the national Geographic Channel host Harry performed the classic Sichuan opera *Rolling Lights*, and the German Nona performed the classic Sichuan opera *The Views in the Garden*..... Compared with the past, the form of external communication of Sichuan opera is more and more diversified, and people's acceptance to this opera is also higher and higher. The external translation of Sichuan opera can provide language carrier for the international dissemination of the Bashu culture and expand its international influence. At the same time, the external translation of Sichuan opera is also one of the channels of cultural exchange, which can absorb the cultural essence of the recipient countries in the process of external communication, and then greatly promote the mutual communication and development in different cultures. Therefore, by persisting well in the external communication of Sichuan opera, can it help to alleviate cultural cognitive barriers and promote the understanding and communication between cultures, so it is certain to achieve the wide spread of Sichuan opera in the world.

4.2 Feasible Strategies for Moving Towards the World Stage

Under the impetus of social, economic and cultural globalization, the external communication of Chinese opera has become an important part of cultural development, and Sichuan opera has correspondingly become an important role in promoting cultural development. Promoting the external communication of Sichuan opera has a long way to go. First of all, at the personal level, the translator needs to use reasonable translation strategies and methods to transform the language in Sichuan opera, which not only need to pay attention to the cultural characteristics of the source language, but also take into account the understanding of the audiences. The translator should establish cultural confidence to the local opera, through enhancing the sense of identity and belongingness to the national culture, so as to actively strengthen the cognitive level of Sichuan opera culture. The translator should also pay attention to the accumulation of translated content to improve personal cultural level as a priority. At the same time, the translator should improve the translation level through some appropriate translation strategies and methods, and promote the continuous improvement of translation quality, sequentially, presenting the authentic Sichuan style to the world through excellent Sichuan opera translation.

In terms of performance form, traditional Sichuan opera performances tend to make the audience's stereotype of Sichuan opera remain in the form of acrobatic performances such as face changing and fire breathing, while ignoring its connotation. Therefore, during the process of promoting the external dissemination of Sichuan opera, the audience's real demands and expectations for this opera can be learned by street interview in colleges and universities, or

collecting opera comments on social media. In this way, the form of external communication can be innovated by combining the performance form with the specific national culture and preferences, and appropriately integrating the local cultural characteristics. For example, it can make a performance fusion between Sichuan opera and foreign opera, through the form which suits the local audience's taste, so as to make a targeted culture export. In addition, Sichuan opera can be promoted in overseas markets through multiple channels by the innovation of communication forms in making cultural and tourism products with cultural characteristics of two countries, and borrowing foreign network platforms to develop the subtitle translation of Sichuan opera. The opera is an important intangible cultural heritage in Bashu region, and the external communication of it has the dual significance in transmission and inheritance [7]. Therefore, it is extremely urgent to actively strengthen local support for Sichuan opera translation, speed up the training of professional Sichuan opera translation talents, and improve its local development system. Therefore, seizing the opportunity of global integration development and taking advantage of the victory is the feasible way to promote the continued development of Sichuan opera.

5. Conclusion

Sichuan opera translation is a branch of the external communication of Chinese native opera culture. With the aid of language as a carrier, the characteristic customs of the Bashu region can be displayed on the world stage. Although this is an opportunity for Sichuan opera to go to the world, it also sets a higher standard for its foreign translation. Properly deal with culture-loaded words to convey cultural charm, use proper translation strategies and methods to improve translation quality, and balance fitting and faithful translation by taking into account Bashu cultural connotation and international background differences, meanwhile, update the presentation form of Sichuan opera, so as to promote more integrated external communication. As Sichuan opera translators, it is essential to achieve the above Sichuan opera translation standards as own responsibility, and make a contribution to show the unique regional flavor of Sichuan opera on the international stage!

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