

Errors in English Translation of Company Profiles on Official Website of Chinese Enterprises and Countermeasures

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Abstract: English introduction on corporate official websites has become an effective way to establish a good corporate image, promote business development at home and abroad, and thus improve economic benefits. However, at present, there are still many English translations of corporate introductions on Chinese company websites that remain at the level of simple literal translation, and there are many mistakes in information processing and layout, which make the translation difficult to achieve the ideal effect, thus hindering the effective communication and exchange of information and even damaging the corporate image. Therefore, this paper summarizes the differences between Chinese and English enterprise profiles, analyzes the common mistakes in English translation of enterprise profiles at present, and puts forward corresponding solutions in order to provide useful reference and guidance for English translation of enterprise profiles.

1. Enterprise Profile

Enterprise profile is a purposeful text. The main purpose of translation is to publicize and promote the enterprise to the outside world and let foreign readers or consumers know themselves in the most direct and effective way, so as to win the recognition of customers and attract more potential customers. ^[1]

An enterprise profile is a brief introduction made by an enterprise to establish its image, promote products, and promote cooperation. It is a high concentration of enterprise information and strives to convey the content that the target readers are most interested in. Therefore, the enterprise profile generally only contains key information such as the business scale, development goals of the enterprise. With the development of the Chinese economy, more and more Chinese enterprises began to expand their foreign markets. For business development, many enterprises provide relevant information to foreign customers by building foreign language websites.

2. Differences between Chinese and English Enterprise Profiles

Chinese and English belong to different language families, and there are great differences in ways of thinking, expression, ideology, customs and culture, which leads to different characteristics in many aspects of Chinese and English corporate profiles. The main differences are as follows:

2.1 Gorgeous vs Simple

In order to achieve good publicity effect, enterprises in China generally use gorgeous language, such as four-character idioms, poems and parallelism sentences, to enhance the beauty of sound, form and meaning. However, the company profiles of British and American companies generally adopt simple and straightforward descriptions. They don't use redundant expressions and pursue simplicity and truthfulness.

Example 1:

Driven by passionate people and a common purpose, P&G brings beloved brands to consumers around the world—including our 50 Leadership Brands that are among the world's most well-known household names. (P&G)

2.2 Bamboo-knot Structure vs Grape-string Structure

At the sentence level, generally speaking, Chinese sentences are mostly bamboo-knot structures, emphasizing parataxis, while English sentences are mostly grape-string structures, emphasizing form and function, with compact sentence structure and concise language.^[2]

Example 2:

At PwC, our professionals with expertise from across all industries work together for the same purpose: to build trust in society and solve important problems. Every day, we develop tailored solutions that help clients overcome business challenges specific to their industries, and turn opportunities into positive outcomes. (PwC)

2.3 Third Person vs First Person

Chinese enterprises generally prefer to use the third person in their enterprise profiles, such as “group” and “company” as subjects, which is more solemn and formal. In English company profiles, the first-person words such as “we” or “our” are often used, and the tone is close to nature and easy to understand, which makes it easy to narrow the distance between enterprises, readers and customers.

Example 3:

Through innovation, we're creating a seamless experience to let customers shop anytime and anywhere and "company" as subjects, which is more solemn and formal. In English company profiles, first-person words such as "we" or "our" are often used, and the tone is close to nature and easy to understand online, through mobile devices and in stores. We are creating opportunities and bringing value to customers and communities around the globe. Walmart operates approximately 11,500 stores under 56 banners in 27 countries and e-commerce websites in 10 countries. We employ more than 2.2 million associates around the world — nearly 1.5 million in the U.S. alone. (Walmart)

3. English Translation Errors of Enterprise Profiles

Nord, a German functionalist, classifies translation errors into four categories: pragmatic translation errors, cultural translation errors, language translation errors and text type translation errors.^[3] In the translation of enterprise profiles, the first three errors are common.

3.1 Language Errors

Language conversion is the most basic problem to be solved in translation. The language errors

in the English translation of enterprise profiles mainly include spelling mistakes, grammatical mistakes, nonstandard words, Chinglish and so on. For example:

Example 4:

“...making Longrich one of the leading company which dominates the cosmetic industry in southern China.” (Longrich)

It can be seen that the usage of “company” in this translation is obviously wrong and should be changed to “companies.” In addition, “southern China” is not an accurate name and should be changed to “southwest China”. Moreover, the meanings of “leading” and “dominates” are repetitive. The above mistakes are all low-level language mistakes, and translators should lay a solid foundation of the language and avoid such mistakes as much as possible.

3.2 Pragmatic Errors

In pragmatics, pragmatic errors refer to the improper way of speaking, which does not conform to the expression habits of the target language readers or the untimely speaking.^[4] Typical pragmatic translation errors in China's corporate profiles are manifested in three aspects: retaining redundant information, missing key information, and improper information conversion. In English translation, literal translation will inevitably affect the effect of publicity. For example:

Example 5:

The project aims to create a high-end and forward-thinking wisdom cluster, featuring the most potent universities and research institutes, covering most extensive and cutting-edge disciplines, embracing most unique mechanisms... (Yili)

The English-translated corporate profile of Yili Company is too rigid in the original sentence and mechanically translated word by word, without taking into account the differences between Chinese and Western languages.

3.3 Cultural Errors

Cultural translation errors are caused by the differences between the two cultures involved. People of different cultural groups are prone to cultural understanding deviation in communication. As far as enterprise profiles are concerned, Chinese enterprises like to list the honorary awards they have won to show their strength. However, in English translation, literal translation will easily lead to cultural deviation. Cultural errors in English translation of enterprise profiles are mainly reflected in the following aspects:

(1) Cultural Errors under the Differences of Values and Ideologies

In the English translation of enterprise profiles of Chinese enterprises, the differences between Chinese and western readers' values and ideology are often ignored. This is embodied in that the Chinese enterprises' introduction is mainly based on the enterprise value and focuses on displaying the image of the enterprise, while English enterprises' introduction is based on consumers, focusing on the consumption value of products or the interests of enterprises and consumers. In the introduction of domestic enterprises, there are some discourses often related to ideology and values, and their English translations are frequently wrongly copied.

Example 6:

*Mr. Liu Ruiqi, is now the **chairman** of the board of HYX Group, the **chairman** of the Presidium of China Federation of Industrial Economics, **Chairman** of International Wool Textile Organization China Committee, the vice president of the China Trademark Association. Mr. Liu Ruiqi is a great entrepreneur, philanthropist and the master in brand management. (Heng Yuanxiang)*

For the concept of “chairman,” China and the West have completely different understandings. Western organizations and enterprises have few such concepts because of the differences in social

environment, ideology and regime. Many titles of the chairman are listed in this company's English enterprise profile, which is not in line with the cultural values of western target language readers and will confuse them. They may even have the opposite effect on corporate propaganda.

(2) Too Many Awards and Honorary Titles

Chinese enterprises like to list the honorary awards they have won in their company profiles to show their strength and product quality. And in the introduction of English translation, many translators often use literal translation directly.

Example 7:

In 1915, Luzhou Laojiao won the Gold Award in Panama Pacific International Exposition. In 1952, it was selected by the first national tasting competition judges into the first our most famous Baijiu in China and then became the only strong aroma Baijiu that won the title of “National Famous Baijiu” for five consecutive times... in November, 1996, 1619 cellars of Luzhou Laojiao continuously are being used for over 100 years, together with 16 ancient brewing workshops and three natural cellar holes, they all were selected into the National Cultural Heritage Conservation Board in March, 2013 ... (Luzhou Laojiao)

The above-mentioned English translation adopts a completely literal translation method, listing a large number of awards and honors of the group. However, in western countries, it is rare for the government to give awards to enterprises, so the target language readers may not agree with such awards. Instead of impressing foreign readers, such translations will make them question the authority of these honorary awards. Therefore, in the translation process, the translator can simply summarize the important awards.

4. Countermeasures for English Translation of Enterprise Profiles

The English translation of enterprise profiles should consider not only the target language purpose, but also the target audience, that is, the differences between Chinese and Western languages, cultures and expression habits, to achieve specific translation purposes. In terms of translation methods, we can learn from Huang Zhonglian's “variation translation theory.” That is to say, translators can adopt methods such as addition, omission, edition, narration, contraction, combination and modification according to the special needs of specific readers under specific conditions.^[5]

4.1 Omission

Omission refers to deleting irrelevant, redundant information in the original text to make the main information more prominent. Specifically, many flowery words, exaggerated rhetoric, repeated ideograms, and some cultural information with Chinese characteristics, such as awards, poems, idioms, etc., can be appropriately deleted to make the translation concise and plain. For example, some repetitive expressions, leadership information, and honor awards can be deleted from the translated texts.

4.2 Restructuring

As mentioned above, emphasizing parataxis in Chinese easily leads to redundant writing, scattered structure, and lack of key information. English, on the other hand, is hypotactic, more logical and coherent. The distinct characteristics between Chinese and English determine that we need to use restructuring techniques in most translations, including logical reorganization and restructuring of the whole text. Through restructuring, the logic and structure of the adjusted target text are clearer and more intuitive, which conforms to the language usage habits of the target

language readers and makes the meaning clearer and easier for the target language readers to accept. In addition, objective language should be used as much as possible in publicity texts, and the texts should be concise and lively simultaneously, which is also in line with the expression habits of Western target language readers.

Example 8:

Original translation: Founded in the late 1980s and striving for ceaseless development, the Hubao Group has achieved great successes in the fashion-manufacturing sector. It is outstanding for being well-equipped with the world's most advanced technologies and is renowned for its maintenance of a high-standard quality system. It is now taking the lead in fashion designs and enjoys a good market share with quality products. The Hubao people have been keeping updating their products with their diligence and intelligence.

Revise translation: Founded in the late 1980's, the Hubao Group has now well developed into a leading enterprise in garment-fashion manufacturing by its great efforts for continuous progress. Enhanced by the world's most advanced technologies and its ceaseless technical innovation, it is now taking the lead in the world fashion designs for its good quality productions.

4.3 Adaptation

In view of the differences in expression styles between Chinese and English enterprise profiles, translators need to rewrite them in translation to make their layout and expression style fit English expression habits. English enterprise profiles pay attention to logical relations, and the articles are clear in context and hierarchical. At the same time, the translator must analyze the logical relationship between Chinese sentences, consider English expression habits, clarify the logical level of information content, and finally translate a well-structured and reasonable translation through the integration of the whole chapter. Adaptation is just one of the most commonly used methods to adjust the original text appropriately according to the needs of the target readers.^[6]

5. Conclusion

Through this research, the following findings have been found as follows:

First, in the process of consulting the English version of Chinese enterprise profiles, the author found that there were obvious spelling, grammar and tense errors in many profiles, and such low-level errors were detrimental to the company's image. In addition, many companies' English profiles are not updated in time, showing outdated information, or there is a complete mismatch between Chinese and English profiles. This indicates that many enterprises in China pay insufficient attention to managing English web pages. If enterprises want to promote internationalization, they must fully realize the vital role of English web pages in international publicity.

Secondly, after the comparative study, the author intuitively found the differences between Chinese and English corporate profiles. For China's enterprises, when writing English-translated enterprise profiles, they must not copy the Chinese profiles mechanically and translate them completely, but use a lot of translation techniques such as omission, restructuring and adaptation, which requires translators to have excellent professional quality, consult foreign similar websites more, or consult foreign professionals, and at the same time, organize review teams to check them repeatedly, so as to minimize translation errors.

Thirdly, through the analysis of English translation errors of corporate profiles in China, the author finds that most of the mistakes are due to the translator's lack of necessary cross-cultural knowledge and awareness. Therefore, as a qualified corporate profile translator, authentic bilingual ability is the foundation, and the key is to understand the target language's culture and master the cultural orientation and taboos in the international market. Only in this way can we handle cultural

issues with ease.

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