

Skopos Theory in the English Translation of Ceramics Texts

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Abstract: Ru kiln, burned in the middle of the Tang Dynasty, the rise of the Northern Song Dynasty, in compliance with the imperial decree of Emperor Huizong of the Song Dynasty to create the color of porcelain like “Colors of the sky clearing after a heavy rain”, became one of the five famous kilns in the Song Dynasty. In the Song Dynasty, Ru porcelain produced at the Ru kilns was one of the most prized varieties of ancient Chinese porcelain. Therefore, the writing of the *Ru porcelain Records* shows the glorious history of Ru porcelain and records the painstaking efforts to restore and develop the contemporary Ru porcelain. Recently, under the guidance of the Skopos Theory, the translator has completed the Chinese translation of the third chapter of this book, which is about “the development and prosperity of Ru Kiln” to introduce the history of porcelain to the target language readers. Due to the fundamental differences between the English and Chinese languages, the study seeks for appropriate translation strategies and methods according to the purpose of translation. As far as possible, while faithfully expressing the meaning of the original text, the translation is in line with the language habits of the target language readers, so as to spread the Chinese porcelain culture.

1. Introduction

China is the birthplace of porcelain in the world, and porcelain production is one of the most important aspects of cultural value orientation. Ru Kiln ranks first among the five famous kilns of Song, Guan, Ge, Jun and Ding. It is the first famous kiln in the history of Chinese ceramics. In addition, Chinese porcelain went global and promoted friendly exchanges between China and the rest of the world. Due to the small number of Ru porcelain preserved, only a few people today are aware of its history, background and culture. Ru porcelain is an important milestone in the history of the development of Chinese celadon, and *Ru porcelain Records* is a systematic and authoritative monograph on Ru porcelain, which details the history, production process, artistic characteristics, and existing rare collections of Ru porcelain, and brings people into a world of distinctive Chinese artifacts [1]. The translation of this book will open a window for foreigners who are passionate about Chinese culture and help them understand Chinese culture. Therefore, it is of great significance to promote Chinese culture beyond our national borders. Ru porcelain is one of the national intangible cultural heritages in Henan Province, the cradle of Chinese civilization, an important source and core component of Chinese culture [2], and a bright star shining in the Central Plains. However, the

English translation of Ru porcelain or the translation research of Ru porcelain is rarely involved in the field of translation. This paper explores the problems existing in the translation of ceramic culture based on practice, and conducts research to illustrate the dissemination and inheritance of China's unique ceramic culture and culture under the guidance of the Skopos Theory.

2. Literature Review

The translation related to ceramics at home and abroad started around the eighteenth century. Due to the deficit generated by ceramics, it stimulated the interest of Europeans in ceramic production. For example, *Tao Shuo*, China's first monograph in the field of ceramics, provides an exhaustive description of the ceramic production process, the system of names and identification methods of ceramics of all dynasties, and contains a wealth of scientific and technological terminology [3]. For the study of ceramic technology, in 1896, The *Tao Shuo* was translated into English by Bushell, who was very interested in China's ceramics and had studied them deeply, and the translation is very valuable [4]. His translation of *Tao Shuo* has a preface and also contains notes and references, etc. About the proper names and historical allusions involved in the original text, etc., he has made notes in the translation for additional explanation [5].

There is little domestic research on ceramics. In the famous ceramic holy land--Jingdezhen, Chen Ning, a scholar of Jingdezhen Ceramic University, has done more research on this. His research results are found in the reviews of several translations of ceramic texts, such as "The First Attempt to Translate Chinese Ceramic Texts in Depth-On the Value of the Confucian-Lianfar Translation of the Jingdezhen Pottery Records" [6], and "The Specific Application of the Theory of Depth Translation to the Practice of Foreign Translation of Chinese Ceramic Texts" [7], etc. This shows that Chinese scholars are not very deep in this field at present, and it also reflects the difficulty of ceramic translation research.

3. Exploration of Translation Methods

Purpose theory in the 1970s, which was proposed and developed by the German translator Hans Vermeer, points out that the translation of language has a strong purpose. In the process of translation, it is necessary for the translator to have or realize a certain intention, so as to translate the original text. Purpose theory breaks the original translation goal based on the standard of "equivalence" and focuses on the actual communicative function, which brings a new research perspective to translation researchers [8]. For the translation of this Ru porcelain text, in addition to the special process word terminology, there is also the existence of culture-loaded words with cultural color. Therefore, the treatment of such cultural load words can be based on the purpose of spreading Chinese culture, taking Ru Porcelain as a carrier of culture, and through the use of dissimilarity translation strategy, so that readers of the target language can try to have more contact with and understanding of the traditional Chinese culture. In addition, if the purpose of translation is to expand the publicity and market of ceramics, the translation strategy of naturalization is appropriate, so as to facilitate their understanding and reconstruct the cultural imagery. In order to achieve the purpose of communication, the translator must reconstruct the cultural imagery according to the target language, so that the translated text can be easily and quickly accepted by the readers.

4. Translation Studies of Ru Porcelain Text

Derived from the recent translation of the relevant chapters of the *Ru porcelain Records*, the understanding of ceramics has been deepened, and the process of porcelain production mentioned is even more complex, which can be seen in the exquisite production of ceramics. Ceramics production

process involves a unique and professional vocabulary, the original text records: “ Rǔyáo ... 70 duōdào gōngxù.(Ru kiln production process is complicated and fine. The style and printing is beautiful. From the selection of ingredients, formula verification, to the molding of the stereotypes, it needs to go through the crushing, slip-casting and other 22 processes, the boutique firing is up to more than 70 processes.)” When these mentioned process terms are translated, the translator is required to be familiar with their processes and procedures, to prepare the terminology before translation, and to determine the accuracy of the terminology in the translation. In addition, Ou Feibing believes that the translation of ceramic terminology should follow the generality, specialization and applicability.

4.1 Terminology translation

Ceramic translation belongs to a kind of scientific and technological translation, thus, the translation method of scientific and technological terminology can guide the translation of ceramic process words. According to Ou Feibing, translators use free translation, direct translation and phonetic translation to translate scientific and technological terminology, and phonetic-meaning translation and phonetic-formal translation sometimes play a key role [9]. For the translation of scientific and technological terminology vocabulary, translators have been mainly using the free translation method and the direct translation method. Ceramic process, as an important achievement of China, translators translate scientific and technological terms will carry traces of Chinese culture, which is another aspect of the formation of Chinese culture [10]. This kind of process terminology needs to be externalized and then interpreted and translated if it wants to translate its real meaning.

4.1.1 Translation of process terms

When dealing with all Ru porcelain-specific terminology or vocabulary with cultural overtones, it is especially important to understand the relevant cultural or historical background, otherwise the translator may not be able to accurately grasp its meaning. Translators need to spend a lot of time to understand them by searching the Internet, reading parallel texts and asking experts for advice. Besides, translators also need to flexibly use translation methods or techniques according to specific contexts and translation purposes [11], and try their best to express.

Example 1:

ST: Rǔyáo ... zhùjiāng ...

TT: Ru Kiln in the porcelain production process is complicated, delicate ... To go through crushing, ball milling, slurry injection, filtering mud.

We can see that the words in this sentence are mostly Ru porcelain firing process in the terminology, analyzing the word “zhù jiāng”. “zhù jiāng” in this paper refers to the ceramic process of grouting, is the preparation of the mud injected into the ceramic production process. Therefore, taking into account the conciseness of the process terminology, and because the ceramic process word has a certain historical and cultural color, the translation is “slip-casting”, and explains the operation of the process word, showing the connection with the ceramic profession, which has a great reference value. Also verified through some searches, the term can be translated as “slip-casting”, which is also in line with the simplicity of scientific and technical terms.

4.1.2 Translation of culturally loaded words

The process of making Ru porcelain recorded in the text is complicated, and the finished products after firing are rich enough to be named with heavy cultural colors.

Example 2:

ST: chánzhīmǔdān

TT: inter-locking peony design (for good wish and wealth)

As for the translation of “chánzhīmǔdān”, since it is a pattern, the translator initially thought that it could be directly translated as “inter-wining peony branches pattern”, but in the subsequent reading of the parallel text, it was found that “Blue and White Award Vase with Inter-locking Lotus Design” in *Porcelain*. It can be translated as “inter-locking peony design”, which can make the target language readers understand Chinese culture. If the implied meaning is expressed, it can be translated as “inter-locking peony design (for good wish and wealth)” with a note, so that the target language readers can understand the use of Chinese culture.

4.2 Sentence translation

Chinese and English belong to completely different language systems. It is not surprising that there are huge differences between the two. Sentence structure is one of the areas where there are great differences. In terms of syntax, the differences between Chinese and English are mainly manifested in the areas of ideograms and dummy conjugations, active and passive, and analysis and synthesis [12]. Therefore, the differences between Chinese and English bring difficulties to translators in the translation process. What’s more, a large number of colloquialisms and ancient Chinese languages bring great trouble to translators. Translators try to find suitable ways to solve these difficulties according to the functions of different text types and under the guidance of the theory of purpose. The following are typical case studies.

Example 3:

ST: Qīngliángsì ... wànwànguàn ...

TT: From Qingliang Temple to Duandian, the kilns made tens of thousands of Guan (about 70 billion yuan) in one day.

This sentence is a very obvious Chinese structure, and the feature of parataxis is very obvious. In the translation, the translator must first consider how to deal with “Qīngliángsì”, “Duandian”. Reading the whole text and related information, the translator found that the two places was the Ru kiln firing place. The name of the two Ru kilns was named by the geographical name, coupled with the significance of the colloquialisms of the reference to the phonetics as “Qingliangsi”, “Duandian”; secondly, the treatment of “guàn”, which is a monetary unit with Chinese culture, and if it is directly transliterated as “Guan”, its connotation can not be conveyed. In the information “Song history - food and goods” said: “... Mǐ shí... liùqībǎi .(Before the years of Xining and Yuanfeng of the Song Dynasty, the price of a stone of rice was no more than six or seven hundred cents.)”. The phrase “wànwànguàn” can be calculated to be “70 billion yuan” by referring to today’s prices, which is translated as “Guan (about 70 billion yuan)” by using the method of phonetic translation with a note. When translating this sentence, combining with the form-fit feature of English, we need to find out the implied subject “the kilns”, and translate the whole sentence as “From Qingliang Temple to Duandian, the kilns made tens of thousands of Guan (about 70 billion yuan) in one day.”

4.3 Chapter translation

The difference in cohesion between English and Chinese makes translators encounter difficulties in the translation process. For Chinese, the method of cohesion is implicit, relying on the logical relationship between sentences and words, and there are no obvious words to express this relationship explicitly. Chinese emphasizes the sequence and chronology of events, with no obvious logical relationship, and the information generally lacks topic sentences. On the other hand, most of the cohesion in English are obvious and are categorized into grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. English cohesion usually uses reference, substitution, conjunction, etc. The logical relationship between sentences can be seen at a glance, and the construction of sentences also has certain logical

rules.

The different cohesion methods between Chinese and English increase the difficulty of translation. In order to overcome this difficulty, translators use conjunctions, pronouns and other methods to make the target text cohesion. In the process of translation, the translator pays more attention to the articulation of the text, and makes the target text structured and logical on the basis of faithfulness to the meaning of the original text. All these are to make the translation more acceptable to the target readers.

Example 4:

ST: ... Rǔyáo...shì mǐn yáo.

TT: According to expert inferences and historical records, there is no doubt that Ru kilns include Ru Folk kilns and Ru Official kilns. Because the so-called “Ru Tribute kiln” is actually the best utensils selected from the Ru Folk kilns and contributed to the imperial court. In fact, it is still a folk kiln.

The paragraph discusses whether the Ru kiln is an official kiln or a folk kiln through some clues. From the point of view of the original text, it is not obvious to clarify the relationship between the cause and the effect if it is translated according to this order. Therefore, by adding phrases and compound prepositions, this paper makes the translation more in line with the sentence structure of English, and the translation is more coherence and logical, which is easy for the readers of the target language to understand.

5. Conclusion

Ceramics, as the treasure of China, inherits the excellent Chinese culture. At the same time, ceramics also make China accelerate to the world. Ceramics-related culture has been publicized more and more strongly to the outside world, but its translation effectiveness needs to be strengthened. The study of ceramic terminology translation helps to determine the standardization of ceramic translation. The term ceramics we are exploring today has played a significant role in China's outstanding traditional culture since ancient times, but the translation research on ceramics is not satisfactory. As a variety of scientific and technological translations, ceramic translation involves a lot of specialized terminology translation. In the future, the comprehensive knowledge system and appropriate methods should be applied more in the ceramic text translation to disseminate ceramic culture. The ceramic culture is becoming a qualified business card representing our country and promoting China's foreign economic and cultural exchanges.

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