

Translation in Intercultural Communication: Differences and Solutions: A Case Study of the English Translated Text of Song of a Pipa Player

Jingliang Yu 

Postgraduate Student, School of Foreign Studies, Jiangsu Normal University, Xuzhou 221116, the People's Republic of China

✉ Corresponding Author: Jingliang Yu, E-mail: 1490113041@qq.com

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ABSTRACT

Intercultural communication has always been an important concept and core hot-spot in the field of intercultural research. In the early 1980s, Chinese scholars introduced the study of intercultural communication. The study of intercultural communication in China has formed a trend of cross-integration with the disciplines including Language Teaching, Translation Studies and Culturology, etc., after about 40 years of development. Thanks to the differences between Chinese and English, there are still many issues in translation on intercultural communication. Therefore, this research focuses on the in-depth analysis of three types of differences in the English translated text of Song of a Pipa Player from the perspective of intercultural communication to put forward corresponding translation strategies for intercultural communication and offer some help to the translation among different cultures.

1. Introduction

Language is not only a carrier of thinking but also a carrier of culture. According to genesis chapter 11 of the *Bible*, God made human beings speak unspoken languages to prevent human beings from uniting to build a high tower to heaven. Thus, they could not communicate with each other. Therefore, it is self-evident of the importance of language in human communication.

Different ethnic groups use different languages and create a different regional culture with apparently regional characteristics. Culture reflects the thoughts, emotions, traditions and customs of a nation. While enriching national emotional communication and daily life, culture also brings obstacles to communications between different countries and nationalities.

However, with the advent of economic globalization, the exchanges between countries and nationalities are increasingly close, and language has become the primary tool of communication. Meanwhile, different languages carry different cultural connotations. Therefore, intercultural communication becomes more and more crucial.

There are substantial similar features for intercultural communication and translation. Intercultural communication refers to the communication between native and non-native speakers and people with different languages and cultural backgrounds. On the other hand, translation is a sort of interlanguage and intercultural communication activity, which is a subjective activity under the control of human consciousness to achieve a certain purpose or intention. Thus, the translator's task is not only to interpret the linguistic signs of the source language for the target language readers, but also to decode the non-linguistic signs of the source language—the cultural connotation (Cao, R. M, 2006, p. 45). That means the translator not only uses different languages proficiently but also has a thorough understanding of the cultural background knowledge in languages.

Song of a Pipa Player is a long narrative poem written by Bai Juyi, who was a poet in the Tang Dynasty. The poem contains a great many of cultural images that are unique to China or quite different from western and Chinese culture, such as "swords and guns", "horses and chariots", "merchants", "cuckoos" and "apes", etc. There are many English translations of *Song of a Pipa Player*, among which the well-known ones are Yang Xianyi, Dai Nedi's and Xu Yuanchong's translated texts. Xu Yuanchong's text underlined the principle of "Faithfulness, Expressiveness and Elegance" to the greatest extent and tried to break through the

bondage of the original text to pursue the beauty of the source text. Yang and Dai's version is more loyal to the cultural characteristics and semantic connotation of the original one.

In view of this, this research will focus on the perspective of intercultural communication, summarize and analyze the differences in the translation of the multiple versions of *Song of a Pipa Player* to put forward corresponding strategies of translation for building a bridge of translation between different cultures and contribute some help to the translation studies of intercultural communication.

2. Literature Review

By entering "Intercultural Communication" in the column of "Subject" of Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) for retrieval, it is found that there are numerous research achievements of an intercultural communication since the introduction of the research of that in China. It is as many as 28491. Among them, there is a huge amount of research achievements in the fields of Intercultural Communication and Translation Studies, Language Teaching, Culturology, Intercultural Communication Competence, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL). For instance, Guo Jianzhong (1999, p. 14) discussed foreignization and domestication strategies from the perspective of culture in his paper "Cultural Factors in Translation: Foreignization and Domestication" and obtained the citation of the number of 2271, which was rarely and extremely high. Gao Yihong (2002, p. 28) stressed that in the process of cultivating intercultural communication competence in his article of "The Cultivation of Intercultural Communication Competence: 'Crossing over' and 'Surpassing over'". He highlighted that we should not only cultivate the ability to "crossing over", but also have the vision of "surpassing over". Hu Wenzhong (2013, p. 6) combined the cultivation of intercultural communication competence with foreign language teaching in the article "How to Position the Competence of Intercultural Communication in Foreign Language Teaching". Thus we can clarify the position of the competence of intercultural communication in language education, especially in Foreign Language Teaching.

At the same time, it was found that there were as many as 2,746 results of research on the "Intercultural Communication Translation" in China by entering "Intercultural Communication" in the "Subject" column and "Translation" in the "Inclusion" column. For example, Sun Yifeng (2003, p. 6) made a thorough and detailed discussion on the ideology in translation studies on intercultural communication in his article "Translation Studies and Ideology: Expanding the Space of Intercultural Dialogue". Sun Yifeng (2012, p. 20), in his paper "Translation and Intercultural Communication Strategies", made an in-depth analysis of translation strategies and intercultural communication strategies, respectively. He reckoned that the untransmissibility of culture was the biggest obstacle faced by the translation of intercultural communication. And Cao Ruiming (2006, p. 46) discussed something about the translation of intercultural communication in the essay of "Translation in the Intercultural Communication: Differences and Integration" from the perspectives of "language and culture", "cultural values" and "thinking" tripartite facing translation differences in intercultural communication and problems. He also made a conclusion that it should be in the two aspects of "Language to Express Meaning" and "the Cultural Infiltration in China and West" to pay attention to the intercultural communication integration issues in translation.

However, by entering "Translation of Intercultural Communication" in the column of "Subject" and "*Song of a Pipa Player*" in the column of "Inclusion" on CNKI, it is found that there are very few papers that have been researched the English translated text of *Song of a Pipa Player* from the perspective of intercultural communication. Thus, there is still much to be done in this field.

3. Methodology

3.1 Literature Research

This study uses the literature research method to identify the results of the "intercultural communication and translation" in China and then analyzes the relevant periodical papers to determine the background, research object, research purpose, research significance, and conclusion of this research.

3.2 Interdisciplinary Approach

This research was carried out using the literature research method to seek out the database paper of the journal of Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), which was often mixed with the interdisciplinary integration of Translation Studies, Language Teaching, Second Language Acquisition and Culturology. On top of that, Intercultural Communication Studies in China are biased towards language teaching (Hu, W. Z, 2005, p. 325) compared with international, intercultural communication research. In the case of the department's participation, it is quite different from the United States in our country's intercultural communication research center (Hu, W.Z, p. 2010-29). Therefore, the use of the interdisciplinary method can combine intercultural communication and his field, make full use of the advantages of each subject and explore the hot issues in the subject of Translation Studies and the problem that needs to be solved to propose the corresponding solutions.

3.3 Empirical Research

In addition to the inter-reality case of the lute bank, this thesis expounds on the different cultural images and translated texts of the lute in the original poem and the Tang Dynasty to clarify the differences between Chinese and western languages and seek the fusion and tactics of translation from the differences, and then offer a valuable reference to promote Chinese culture to “go global”.

4. Differences and Solutions in the Translation in Intercultural Communication

When the ancient civilizations of the east and the West interweave with each other, there will inevitably be cultural conflicts and sparks of cultural differences. The encounter of nations with different languages may enrich both parties' culture and cause conflicts due to cultural differences. Thus, culture makes a crucial difference in the communication and exchanges between ethnic groups with different native languages, which is critical to the success of intercultural communication. In the translation in intercultural communication, the role of cultural factors could not be ignored. Only by understanding the differences between different cultures can effective communication be carried out (Cao Ruiming, 2006, p. 46); Only by understanding the differences of different cultures and languages can we put forward corresponding translation strategies through the differences. Thus, that could be better applied in intercultural communication.

(1) Differences in Literary Forms

Since English is included in the Indo-European language family, while Chinese belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family, there are tremendous differences between the two languages. For example, English is “Tree-shaped”, while Chinese is “Bamboo-shaped”. Long sentences are much more frequently used in English, while short sentences are always witnessed in Chinese. Therefore, different languages imply different cultures and distinctive literary forms. For instance, the characters of the number of words, the level, the number of sentences and the rhyme in Chinese jointly constitute the meter in poetry, while English poetry also attaches great importance to meter and has certain requirements for the meter.

Additionally, the poets in Tang and other dynasties of China were good at using rhetorical devices such as exaggeration, metaphor and scripture, and romantic writing techniques. The native English poets would like to use the figures of speech, personification and some other rhetorical devices, but the use of classical rhetoric is not as good as the Chinese poets. In view of that, there are great differences between Chinese and English in literary forms and appropriate translation strategies should be chosen according to specific contexts to achieve the goal of the translation in intercultural communication.

(1) S: 银瓶乍破水浆迸，铁骑突出刀枪鸣。(Xu Yuanchong, 2012, p. 284)

T: Suddenly we heard water burst a silver jar,

And the clash of Spears And sabres come from afar. (Xu Yuanchong, 2012, p. 127)

Bai used the antithesis of “银瓶” and “铁骑”，“乍破” and “突出”，“水浆迸” and “刀枪鸣” in that poem. Although Xu did not correspond to the original word one by one in the translated text of this poem, he made a rhyme at the end. Meanwhile, the translated text adopted a flashback translation, using “water burst a silver jar”, “Clash of spears and sabres come from afar” and the original “silver bottle, water slurry burst”, “cavalry, sword and gun” to form a flashback dual. Moreover, the translated text added the conjunction “and” by adding words to make the semantic coherence and logic clearer in the sentence. It not only preserves the form of the original poem, but better realizes the semantic transmission, enhances the translation's readability and acceptability, and then successfully realizes the translation in the intercultural communication.

(2) Differences in Cultural Images

Culture has strong social, linguistic, ethnic and regional attributes. Each culture has its own connotation and characteristics. Since the Han Dynasty put forward the idea of “Rejecting all other schools of thought and honoring Confucianism”, Chinese people and its culture have been deeply influenced and baptized by Confucian culture for thousands of years. Gradually, Confucianism has become an inherent traditional thought in this country and has produced a great quantity of unique cultural images in China, such as “Bowling”, “the Couplets in Spring Festival”, “Dumplings”, “Zongzi”, etc. However, the Western world is deeply affected by Christianity and some other religions, forming a culture with Christianity as its features and producing plenty of religious-related words, such as God, pray, priest, etc. Therefore, the same word in different languages may contain different connotations and represent largely different cultural images.

S: 门前冷落车马稀，老大嫁作商人妇。(许渊冲, 2012, p. 285)

T: Fewer and Fewer were cabs and steeds at my door;

I married a smug merchant when my prime was o'er. (Xu Yuanchong, 2012, p. 128)

It is significant for the differences between Chinese and Western cultures. "carriage" usually refers to a cart in our ancient culture, while when mentioning "carriage" in western culture, people usually think of a four-wheeled carriage. In traditional Chinese culture, the huge number of horses used in horse-drawn carriages is closely related to the status of horse owners. For example, there is a proverb that "the Son of Heaven drives the carriage driven by six horses, the Vassal drives the one by five, the Qing drives four, the Dafu three, the Shi two and the Concubine one". Monosyllabic words are often used in ancient Chinese. Thus, the word of "chariot and horse" in the original poem probably refers to two things: "carriage" and "horse". Therefore, we need to translate the "车马" into "cabs and steeds".

Furthermore, carriage seating etiquette also shows the level of carriage passengers in ancient Chinese culture. In the Qin and Han dynasties, "右" was the upper rule. For instance, "After finishing my work, I returned to my country and honored Xiuru as Shangqing, who was to the right of Lian Po." And in the Warring States Period, the "东" was regarded as a respect, such as "this bracket once for the general, east and toward, no army officials dare to look up to." With the passage of time, the "南" was regarded as the top in the late Qing Dynasty and the early Ming Dynasty, such as "hear its people to, all leans and ceremonies, Zai zhu below all make it sit on the south." Thus, there are some differences in the cultural connotation of carriage in Chinese and western culture. When translating poetry into English, we need to try to choose appropriate translation strategies and methods from the perspective of intercultural communication. For instance, the theory of Sub-text can also be used to make the translation easier to understand by adding footnotes and end-notes, which can enhance the readability of the translated text.

(3) Differences in Myths and Legends

Whether it is the *Iliad* and *Homer's Epic* of ancient Greece, or *the Book of History* and *the Classic of Mountains and River* of China, a detailed depiction has appeared in the Oriental and Western myths and legends, such as Prometheus and Pangu. However, the translation of the images of myths and legends is often the hardship in translating poetry into English. Thus, it can be found that the translator can use the combination of Foreignization and Domestication in the translation of the original text to "fill the gap" between Chinese and Western culture through the interpretation of the original poem and the translation to ensure the readability of the translation and the accurate transmission of the images of myths and legends for realizing the intercultural translation of poetry.

S: 其间旦暮闻何物？杜鹃啼血猿哀鸣。（许渊冲，2012，p. 285）

T: What is here to be heard from daybreak till nightfall

But Gibbon's cry and Cuckoo's homeward-going call? (Xu Yuanchong, 2012, p. 129)

Through a comparative analysis of the original poem and Xu's translated text, it is found that the myth and legend in the original one is "azaleas crying for blood", while "apes crying for blood" is a common cultural image in the poem. "Azaleas cry for blood" means that the cuckoo is said to howl through the night until it coughs up blood. Since then, people have sometimes used this reference to describe heartbreak. Likewise, the "ape whine" symbolizes the emotion of sorrow. The translated text was determined to retain the myth of "the cuckoo's cry" and the image of "the ape's whine" and translated them successively into "Gibbon's cry" and "Cuckoo's homeward-going call". As a matter of fact, considering the Syntax structure and the end rhyme of English, the translation method of flashback was adopted.

However, Xu's version also made some changes to the original poem. "啼血" was only translated as "crying" in the translation in the original poem without the image of "blood". In Western culture, "blood" often means "bloodiness" and "violence", which is full of derogatory meanings. As a result, it may be out of consideration for readability and acceptability of the target text that the translation was not translated.

Thus, when translating poetry into English, the strategy of combining Foreignization and Domestication needs to be adopted on the premise of retaining the image of the original poem's myth and legend as far as possible to make the translation conform to the principle of "Faithfulness, Expressiveness and Accuracy", and provide corresponding reference for the "going global" of the poetry culture of China.

5. Results

This research analyzed the poem of *Song of a Pipa Player* and some examples from the Xu Yuanchong's English translated text from the perspective of intercultural communication and found that western culture is influenced by the factors of Christianity and other religions, while Chinese culture has been deeply influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism since ancient times. Thus, there are enormous differences between Chinese and Western culture. And the huge differences are the hardship of translation in intercultural communication. In view of that, this research interprets the original poem and the English version of

Song of a Pipa Player from the perspective of intercultural communication to explore the differences in the English version in the literary form, cultural images, myths and legends and seek the corresponding measures for the differences. The analysis found that when treating the corresponding cultural imagery phenomenon of "untranslatability", we could adopt the method of transliteration or literal translation and be based on specific contexts. We need to timely adjust the relevant translation strategies, such as by using "the combination of Foreignization and Domestication", "Deputy Text Annotation" translation strategy of Chinese cultural image and the characteristics of vocabulary in English translated text and to keep under the premise of "Chinese cultural elements". Meanwhile, we need to enhance the readability of the text and stimulate the interest of readers in other cultures to promote the communication among different cultures.

6. Conclusion

Translation plays an important role in removing interpersonal communication barriers, promoting communications and enriching cultural diversity. The translation is a conversion between the source and target languages and an important approach to intercultural communication (Fang Jing, Guo Jirong, 2020, p. 94). Translation plays the role of "Medium", building a bridge of communication between different languages and cultures and carries the banner of intercultural communication and language and cultural innovation.

This research compared as well as analyzed the original poem of *Song of a Pipa Player* with its English version and sought out that there were different forms between Chinese and Western cultures in all aspects from the perspective of intercultural communication. Therefore, translators should flexibly use different translation strategies and methods according to the specific context when dealing with the "untranslatability" and cultural differences in the original text to enhance the readability and acceptability of the target text. For instance, translation strategies and principles including the "Combination of Foreignization and Domestication", "Annotation to the Sub-text" and "Faithfulness, Expressiveness and Accuracy" can be adopted. Thus, it will contribute to research on the translation among different cultures and offer some useful suggestions to those who would like to do the translation.

However, there are still some limitations in this study. For example, it is slightly narrow and inadequate for the corpus of this article. Consequently, I hope that more detailed, accurate, and comprehensive research could be done based on the corpus approach. In the end, I trust more translated versions of ancient works of China will be made and more bridges will be established among Chinese and other cultures.

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