

Research on the English Translation of Vocabulary with Chinese Characteristics in the Context of the Belt and Road Initiative

Jie Cheng

Foreign Languages College of Inner Mongolia University, Hohhot, 010070, Inner Mongolia, China

chengjie1220@126.com

Keywords: Vocabulary with Chinese Characteristics; the Belt and Road Initiative; English Translation Principles; English Translation Strategies; Cross-Cultural Communication

Abstract: Against the backdrop of the in-depth advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative, cultural exchanges between China and countries along the routes have become increasingly frequent. The English translation of vocabulary with Chinese characteristics holds significant importance for the dissemination of Chinese culture. Based on translation studies and cultural communication theories, this article comprehensively employs methods such as literature research to explore the principles and strategies for the English translation of such vocabulary in this context. The study finds that the translation should adhere to the principles of accuracy, cultural adaptability, acceptability, and conciseness. Meanwhile, strategies like literal translation, free translation, transliteration, transliteration with annotation, and analogy can be adopted. These principles and strategies work in concert to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers, accurately convey the connotations of vocabulary with Chinese characteristics, and enhance the international dissemination effect of Chinese culture. This can provide practical guidance for the English translation of vocabulary with Chinese characteristics and facilitate the better global outreach of Chinese culture.

1. Introduction

Since its proposal, the Belt and Road Initiative has not only promoted economic cooperation among countries along the routes but also built a broad platform for the exchange of diverse cultures [1]. Language, as a key carrier of cultural communication, plays a crucial role in the English translation of vocabulary with Chinese characteristics during this process of cross-cultural exchanges [2]. In-depth research on the English translation of such vocabulary in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative is of undeniable significance for enhancing the international influence of Chinese culture and promoting in-depth cultural integration between China and foreign countries [3].

Vocabulary with Chinese characteristics contains rich information about China's history, culture, society, etc., and is a vivid embodiment of Chinese culture [4]. However, due to significant differences in culture and linguistic structures between China and the West, the English translation of these words faces numerous challenges [5]. How to accurately convey the connotations of the vocabulary while taking into account the cultural backgrounds and comprehension habits of the target audience has become an important issue that urgently needs to be addressed in the field of translation.

Previous studies on the English translation of vocabulary with Chinese characteristics have partially focused on the translation of vocabulary in specific fields, such as politics and economics. Some have also emphasized exploring translation methods from the perspective of a single translation theory [6]. However, under the specific and far-reaching context of the Belt and Road Initiative, there is still a lack of systematic and comprehensive research on the principles and strategies for the English translation of vocabulary with Chinese characteristics.

Based on the broad backdrop of the Belt and Road Initiative, this article comprehensively applies multidisciplinary theories such as translation studies and cultural studies, aiming to deeply analyze

the effective paths for the English translation of vocabulary with Chinese characteristics. The paper strives to provide useful references for the accurate dissemination of such vocabulary in the international context and facilitate the better global outreach of Chinese culture.

2. Relevant Theoretical Foundations

Functional Equivalence Theory, proposed by Eugene Nida, emphasizes functional equivalence between the target text and the source text rather than formal correspondence. For the English translation of vocabulary with Chinese characteristics, this means not being confined to the surface form of the words but striving to evoke a similar response in the minds of target-language readers as that in the minds of source-language readers [7].

Skopos Theory holds that the purpose of translation determines the translation methods and strategies. In the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, the purpose of the English translation of vocabulary with Chinese characteristics is to promote cultural exchange and dissemination, enabling foreign audiences to understand Chinese culture. Therefore, appropriate translation methods should be chosen according to this purpose during translation [8].

Cultural Communication Theory emphasizes the interdependent relationship between culture and language. Language is the carrier of culture, and culture is inherited and disseminated through language. Vocabulary with Chinese characteristics carries rich information about Chinese culture, and its English translation process is, in fact, the process of the external dissemination of Chinese culture [9]. Languages under different cultural backgrounds have unique expressions and cultural connotations, which requires full consideration of the differences in target-language cultures when translating vocabulary with Chinese characteristics.

According to Cultural Communication Theory, cultural dissemination needs to adapt to the target-language cultural environment to improve the dissemination effect. When translating vocabulary with Chinese characteristics into English, translators should have an in-depth understanding of the target-language culture to avoid misunderstandings caused by cultural differences.

3. Principles for the English Translation of Vocabulary with Chinese Characteristics in the Context of the Belt and Road Initiative

Within the broad framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, exchanges among countries have become increasingly frequent, and the accuracy of the English translation of vocabulary with Chinese characteristics is of utmost importance. Accurate translation requires translators not only to understand the surface meaning of the words but also to grasp their deep cultural connotations and meanings in specific contexts. This is the key to ensuring the true transmission of information and avoiding misunderstandings. For example, when translating vocabulary in the political field, precision is essential. Any deviation in the translation of specific policy-related vocabulary may lead to a misinterpretation of China's policies by the international community.

Cultural differences pose a significant challenge in the English translation of vocabulary with Chinese characteristics. To make the translation understandable and acceptable to the target-language audience, the principle of cultural adaptability needs to be followed. People from different cultural backgrounds have diverse ways of thinking, values, and expression habits. Figure 1 takes the vocabulary related to traditional festivals in China as an example.

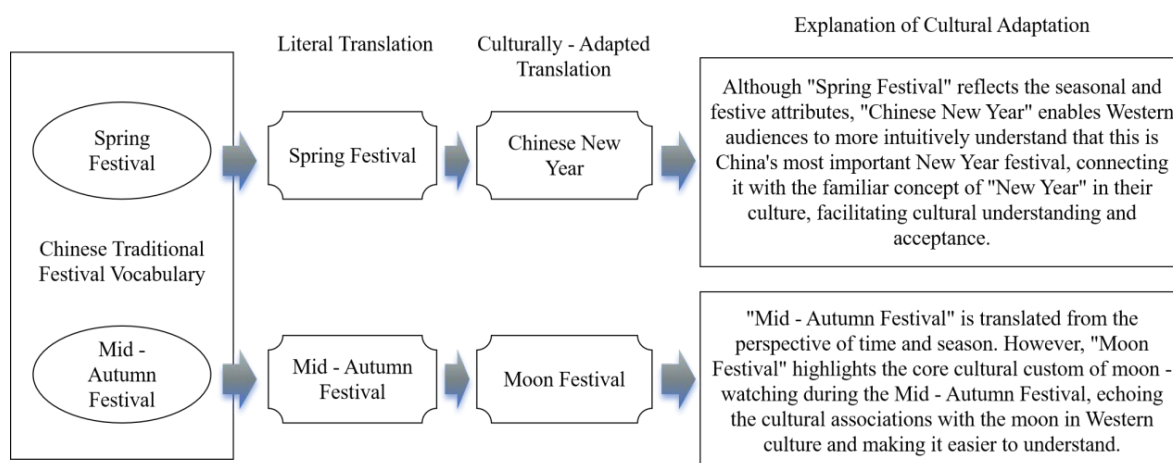


Figure 1 Comparative Analysis of English Translations of Chinese Traditional Festival Vocabulary

As can be seen from Figure 1, translation methods that take cultural adaptability into account can effectively bridge the cultural gap and enhance the understanding of Chinese culture.

The principle of acceptability focuses on the degree of acceptability of the translated text in the target-language environment. The translation should not only be accurate and culturally adapted but also conform to the linguistic habits and expression norms of the target language, avoiding a stiff and obscure style. For example, when translating some internet-popular vocabulary with Chinese characteristics, the context of foreign internet culture should be considered.

The principle of conciseness aims to make the translation concise and clear, facilitating memorization and dissemination. In the era of information explosion, concise translations have a greater advantage in dissemination. Especially in communication scenarios such as business and diplomacy under the Belt and Road Initiative, concise expressions can improve communication efficiency.

In summary, the principles of accuracy, cultural adaptability, acceptability, and conciseness jointly form the principle system for the English translation of vocabulary with Chinese characteristics in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative. Translators need to consider these principles comprehensively to achieve effective English translation and cultural dissemination of vocabulary with Chinese characteristics.

4. English Translation Strategies for Vocabulary with Chinese Characteristics in the Context of the Belt and Road Initiative

(1) Literal Translation Strategy

Literal translation is a method that directly translates words according to their literal meanings while preserving the form and content of the original text. In the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, for some vocabulary with Chinese characteristics, literal translation can present the cultural features of China in an authentic way, allowing the world to come into contact with and understand China's unique cultural elements. This strategy is particularly applicable when there are certain commonalities in linguistic structure and cultural cognition between the source language and the target language, or when the concepts expressed by the vocabulary are relatively intuitive.

Literal translation not only helps to preserve cultural characteristics but also enriches the world's linguistic and cultural treasury. With the rise of China's influence, an increasing number of Chinese vocabulary terms translated literally have been accepted and used by the international community, becoming unique cultural symbols in cross-cultural exchanges.

(2) Free Translation Strategy

Free translation, on the other hand, involves conveying the meaning of vocabulary in a natural and appropriate way in the target language, breaking free from the constraints of the original text's form, based on a full understanding of its connotations. Due to significant cultural differences between China and the West, some vocabulary with Chinese characteristics may cause difficulties

or misunderstandings for target-language readers if literally translated. In such cases, free translation becomes crucial.

Free translation focuses on conveying the cultural connotations and substantive meanings behind the vocabulary. Figure 2 takes China's political concept vocabulary as an example.

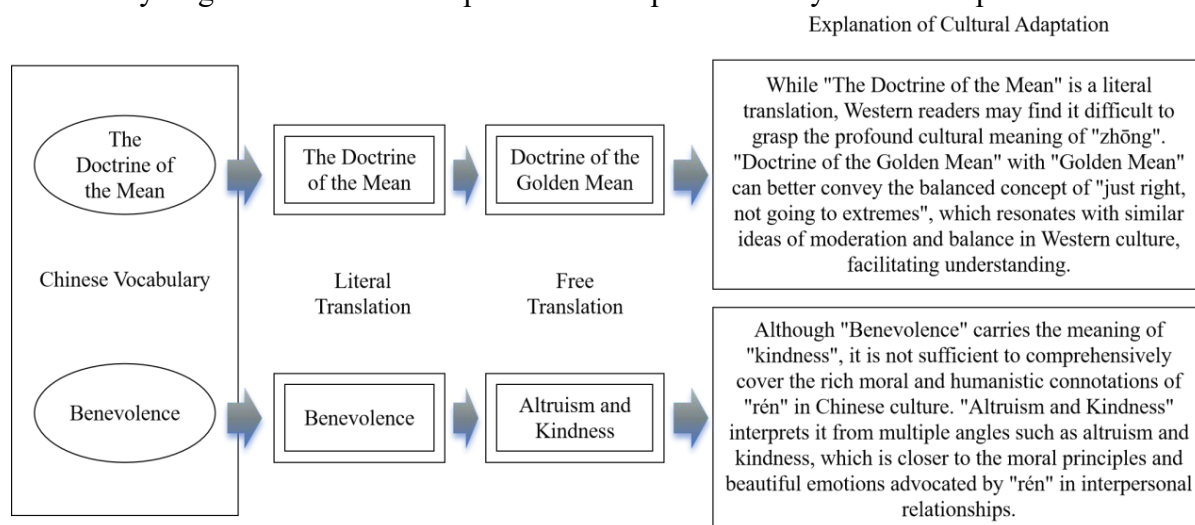


Figure 2 Analysis of English Translations of Some Chinese Traditional Value Vocabulary

As can be seen from Figure 2, the free translation strategy enables vocabulary with Chinese characteristics to convey their core meanings in a way familiar to target-language readers when bridging cultural gaps, thereby enhancing cultural understanding and identification.

(3) Transliteration Strategy

Transliteration is a translation method that involves transcribing Chinese vocabulary using the letters or phonetic symbols of the target language based on its pronunciation. For vocabulary with Chinese characteristics that have no corresponding concepts in the target-language culture and are difficult to accurately convey their unique connotations through other means, transliteration is an effective choice.

With the global dissemination of Chinese culture, many transliterated terms with Chinese characteristics have been widely accepted and have become part of the world's languages. These terms have entered the international context through transliteration, preserving their authentic cultural characteristics and becoming important carriers for spreading China's unique culture.

The frequent use of transliterated terms in international exchanges not only enriches the vocabulary of the target language but also provides unique linguistic symbols for the dissemination of Chinese culture, making Chinese culture more recognizable worldwide.

(4) Transliteration with Annotation Strategy

The transliteration with annotation strategy involves adding brief explanatory text on the basis of transliteration to help target-language readers understand the meaning of the vocabulary. This strategy combines the dual advantages of preserving cultural characteristics through transliteration and explaining connotations through annotations. It is particularly suitable for vocabulary with profound cultural backgrounds that may be incomprehensible after mere transliteration.

The transliteration with annotation strategy effectively reduces the difficulty of understanding for target-language readers while preserving the authenticity of the culture, thus building a bridge for the international dissemination and understanding of vocabulary with Chinese characteristics.

(5) Analogy Strategy

The analogy strategy involves using concepts, things, or cultural images familiar to target-language readers to draw analogies with vocabulary with Chinese characteristics, helping them quickly establish a cognitive framework for the new vocabulary. This strategy leverages cultural similarities to enable target-language readers to understand vocabulary with Chinese characteristics based on their existing knowledge and experiences.

In the cross-cultural exchanges driven by the Belt and Road Initiative, these English translation

strategies do not exist in isolation but rather complement and cooperate with each other. Translators should flexibly select and apply appropriate strategies based on the characteristics of the vocabulary, cultural backgrounds, and translation purposes to achieve accurate and effective external dissemination of vocabulary with Chinese characteristics and promote in-depth cultural exchanges and integration between China and foreign countries.

5. Conclusions

This article conducts research on the English translation of vocabulary with Chinese characteristics in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative. By sorting out relevant theoretical foundations, it clarifies the important position of such translation in cultural exchanges. Based on translation theories and cultural communication theories, it proposes English translation principles of accuracy, cultural adaptability, acceptability, and conciseness. Accuracy ensures the precise transmission of the connotations of vocabulary, avoiding misunderstandings; cultural adaptability makes the translation align with the cultural background of the target language, enhancing understanding; acceptability guarantees that the translation conforms to the expression habits of the target language, facilitating its acceptance; conciseness is conducive to the efficient dissemination of information. Meanwhile, the paper explores English translation strategies such as literal translation, free translation, transliteration, transliteration with annotations, and analogy. Literal translation preserves cultural characteristics, free translation breaks through cultural barriers, transliteration conveys unique concepts, transliteration with annotations balances characteristics and understanding, and analogy promotes cognition by leveraging familiar concepts. Different strategies are applicable to different types of vocabulary with Chinese characteristics.

In the multicultural communication scenarios of the Belt and Road Initiative, translators should flexibly and comprehensively apply these principles and strategies according to the characteristics of the vocabulary, cultural differences, and the purposes of communication. This not only helps achieve accurate English translation of vocabulary with Chinese characteristics but also promotes the widespread dissemination and in-depth understanding of Chinese culture internationally, enhancing its international influence and facilitating the sustainable development of cultural exchanges and cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative.

References

- [1] Tang Xiaoxia. Research on the English Translation Strategies of Chinese Characteristic Vocabulary from the Perspective of Constructivist Translation Studies[J]. Journal of Lanzhou Polytechnic College, 2024, 40(5): 31-33.
- [2] Wu Simin, Tang Zhenlian, Zhou Lidan. Strategies for Cultivating the English Translation Ability of Chinese Cultural Characteristic Vocabulary among English Majors[J]. Yangtze River Series, 2022(4): 44-46.
- [3] Che Yunfeng, Tian Cong, Wang Pei. A Brief Analysis of the English Translation of High-frequency Keywords in the Normalized Prevention and Control of Public Health Emergencies[J]. Chinese Translators Journal, 2023, 44(3): 156-161.
- [4] Ning Qiang, Tang Xiaodong. A Comparative Study of the English Translation Methods of Characteristic Words in Chinese Buddhist Scriptures[J]. Chinese Science & Technology Translators Journal, 2021, 34(01): 26-30 + 45.
- [5] Jiao Dan. An Analysis of the English Translation of the Food Culture in Ancient Chinese Classics and Poems[J]. Chinese Translators Journal, 2024, 45(5): 164-168.
- [6] Li Haifeng. Evaluation of Chinese-English Translation: Cultural Consciousness and Linguistic Awareness in Translation[J]. Chinese Translators Journal, 2020, 41(6): 183-189.
- [7] Liu Lu. A Study on the English Translation of Traditional Chinese Medicine Classics from the

Perspective of Cultural Communication[J]. Lishizhen Medicine and Materia Medica Research, 2021, 32(01): 256-258.

[8] He Jing. A Study on the English Translation Teaching Methods from the Perspective of Tea Culture[J]. Fujian Tea, 2022, 44(8): 90-92.

[9] Jia Xiaojiao. A Study on the English Translation Methods in International Tea Culture Exchanges[J]. Fujian Tea, 2022, 44(05): 210-212.