

On Foreign Translation of Chinese Agricultural Classics from the Perspective of Intercultural Communication

-- Take *Qi Min Yao Shu* as an Example

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Abstract: The classics have always been a relatively important part of Chinese traditional culture, and the vast number of classics is the main carrier of Chinese traditional culture. At the same time, the translation of agricultural texts is an indispensable part of Chinese culture to go out and enhance its communication power and influence. Through the translation of agricultural classics texts into English, the target readers who lack Chinese cultural background or have insufficient cultural background can recognize the excellent Chinese traditional culture. While the number of agricultural texts is relatively small compared with other fields and has not been given due attention. Moreover, Chinese agricultural texts are mostly in literary languages, which are not only difficult to understand but also require strong professional translations. The *Qi Min Yao Shu* is one of the most complete books on agriculture in China, reflecting the knowledge of agricultural science accumulated by the working people of China before the sixth century, and is a treasure of knowledge on agriculture. From the perspective of cross-cultural communication, the foreign translations of culturally loaded words, agricultural terms, sentences, and styles in the *Qi Min Yao Shu* are studied with typical cases selected from them. Finally, the significance of the study of the foreign translation of Chinese agricultural texts is that: (1) according to different translation methods, the translation principles of agricultural texts are summarized (2) this thesis can enrich the number of foreign translations of agricultural texts and serve as a reference for later research.

Keywords: *Qi Min Yao Shu*, Foreign Translation of Classics, Translation strategies, Translation methods.

1. Introduction

After reviewing the research status of “English translation of classics”, translation principles, translation methods and other related papers in CNKI, Wanfang, Shanghai Journal of Translators and East Journal of Translation, we found that domestic scholars Li Jing studied Chinese classics from the perspective of “recontextualization”, Zhou Siyu and Cao Qinqin discussed the English translation of Chinese classics from the perspective of “naturalization and dissimilation”, and Shi Jiaojiao studied the “discourse perspective theory”. Zhou Siyu and Cao Qinqin discussed the English translation of Chinese classics from the perspective of “naturalization and alienation”, and Shi Jiaojiao researched from the perspective theory of “discourse”. Roger T. Ames, a foreign scholar, says, “The way to a more appropriate and accurate reading of the Chinese canon is not to improve translation methods, but to make people understand Chinese philosophy as it is.” In the process of translation, Shiling Lan (Julia Lovell) pays great attention to the reader's reading experience and adopts more naturalized translation strategies to reduce the lengthy and redundant lines and make the translation more fluent and natural and vivid. In terms of translation methods, the core issue of translation is the regeneration of meaning and the presentation of connotation. This is especially important for the translation of canonical texts, which should be meaning-oriented, with direct translation as an aid. However, for some unique words in canonical texts, especially for medical and agricultural texts, in addition to direct translation and paraphrase, phonetic translation with annotation is needed to facilitate the understanding of the target readers. In addition, purely textual translations of Chinese texts with high content will be difficult to attract foreign readers who have grown up in the new digital media

environment. In order to change this situation, it is necessary to adapt to the reading habits of readers, to carry out a retranslation of the Chinese classics with new translation methods and new translation design and layout, and to retranslate and republish the Chinese classics with new translation methods and new translation design and layout.

2. A Brief Introduction of Intercultural Communication

As a discipline, intercultural communication emerged in the United States in the 20th century, with Edward Howell's 1959. *The Language of Silence* is seen as the foundation of intercultural studies. Intercultural communication refers to the study of the relationship between language and culture as the basis for the study of how people of different cultures interact with each other across cultures. The relationship between language and culture is the basis for the study of the values, ways of thinking, and cultural practices of people from different cultures in the process of cross-cultural and non-verbal communication. The study is based on the relationship between the values, ways of thinking, cultural practices, and perspectives of people from different cultures in the process of intercultural and nonverbal communication and the barriers they pose. It focuses on the relationship between the individual's existing culture and changes in the individual's existing cultural heritage, combined with new cultural perceptions, skills, and behavioral attitudes. The effect of these changes in the intercultural communication process varies, and the effect of cross-cultural communication varies. In other words, it serves as a bridge between communication and the language to communicate with the audience. Language and translation play an extremely important role during different communication. It goes

without saying that language and translation play an extremely important role during culturally diverse communication. The breadth and depth of translation directly determine the breadth and depth of intercultural communication.

3. Prospects and Deficiency of Classics Translation

3.1. Prospects of Classics Translation

In the 19th and 20th centuries, there were missionaries and sinologists who had already translated the canonical texts. Some scholars felt that since there were already English translations, why was it necessary to continue translating and studying the canonical texts? Xu Jun (1994) has summarized several reasons for the emergence of retranslation: first, the existing translation is incomplete; second, the existing translation is a retranslation; third, the existing translation is old in language and does not meet the aesthetic habits of contemporary people; fourth, the existing translation has more mistakes and needs to deepen the understanding and improve the expression; fifth, the existing translation is a joint translation and is not harmonious in style. These reasons can actually be used as the conditions for retranslation.

With the popularization of the Internet, people rely more and more on their smartphones to get all kinds of information, and people's reading has become fragmentation. Fragmentation is a post-modernist concept that refers to the breaking down of a complete thing into many fragmented pieces and was later introduced into communication science to refer to the incomplete and intermittent reading mode that emerged along with the development of Internet technology and the accelerated pace of life through terminal receivers such as tablets, smartphones, and e-readers (Long, M. H., 2020). Compared with traditional reading, this mode of reading caters to the needs of modern people with its unique advantages and has become an irreversible trend in the context of new media integration (Ma Jianguo 2016). In the digital era, the fast-paced life and the explosion of information. The younger generation of readers is no longer too fond of large books and is reluctant to engage in deep reading. As Carr (Carr, 2010) got feedback in a survey about online culture, classics like *War and Peace* are not read anymore because people think such works are too long and not interesting enough. In addition, in the digital era, audiences' aesthetics also show a tendency toward sensuality, which is manifested in their preference to accept visual images, so the reading mode has become the most preferred reading method of today's audiences (Zhang, Lingli, 2013).

3.2. Deficiency of Classics Translation

First of all, as readers are more interested in the visual experience of reading, multimodal texts with pictures, audio, and video are preferred. Under this circumstance, purely textual translations of Chinese classics with high content will hardly attract foreign readers who have grown up in the new digital media environment. In order to change this situation, it is necessary to adapt to the reading habits of readers and to carry out a retranslation of the canonical texts by changing the mode of translation and the mode of distribution of the translations, i.e., to retranslate and republish the Chinese canonical texts with new translation methods and new translation design and layout on the basis of ensuring the classicism and ideology of the contents of the canonical texts

(Long, 2020).

Secondly, the discussion of the criteria of canonical translation criticism is still not systematic, the critical method still lacks statute and operability, and the exploration of its essence is not sufficient. The lack of relevant theoretical research has undoubtedly restricted the depth of the relevant research. (Zhang, C., Yang, N. W., 2021)

Again, from the connotation of canonical translation, we can see some problems that still exist at present and need our attention. Firstly, the research method of canonical translation is relatively single. At present, the research on the translation of Chinese classical texts is mainly based on qualitative research, and there is less research by means of corpus research. Researchers mostly make subjective judgments, put forward hypotheses about the nature of canonical translation or the process of canonical translation, and select a few examples to argue, mostly using descriptive research methods. The conclusions drawn from such a research approach are inevitably subjective and one-sided. (Shan Yu, Wang Yun, 2022)

Finally, the translation of classics has been piled up for research, the number of scientific and technical canonical texts such as ethnic canonical texts and Chinese medical canonical texts is relatively small compared to other fields and has not been given due attention. In addition, scholars should devote more energy and time to the study of agricultural texts.

4. Strategies and Methods of Chinese Agricultural Classics

Is the translation strategy of canonical texts reader-centered or author-centered?

From the history of translation, foreign translators have generally adopted a "naturalization" translation strategy for Chinese canonical texts. Similarly, in terms of textual expression, foreign translators will also favor the reading habits of the readers of the translated text or serve Western culture. The translation strategy of naturalization is not only a common translation strategy adopted by foreign translators but also by most Chinese translators (Su Xiaoqiang, 2022). "Naturalization" is still the first choice because such translations are more easily accepted by overseas readers and more effective in spreading Chinese culture. In the process of translation, Julia Lovell pays much attention to the reader's reading experience and adopts the naturalization strategy more often to reduce the lengthy and redundant lines and make the translation more fluent, natural, and vivid. The strategy of naturalization can better protect the language and culture of the native speaker, convey the ideological connotation of the language and culture, break the cultural hegemony of other countries, and establish a comprehensive and positive national image. The original Chinese culture has been lost under the so-called "naturalization" strategy, which also reflects the inadequacy of the naturalization strategy from one side. The translation produced by the alienation strategy can hardly meet the linguistic standards of the translated language, which will not convince the readers, but will cause the rejection of the readers and affect the communication of the whole translation and the construction of the national image (Su Xiaoqiang, 2022). The choice between naturalization and dissimilation requires the translator's initiative. However, with the increasing popularity of Chinese culture around the world, the heterodox

method, which is based on the principle of preserving the culture of the source language, has become mainstream in the English translation of canonical texts (S.Y. Zhou, Q.Q. Cao, 2019). Translators must also refer to the relevant English literature, compare and analyze the corresponding concepts in English, and choose the appropriate expressions to convey the meaning (Wang, Hong, 2013).

In terms of translation methods, the core issue of translation is the regeneration of meaning and the presentation of connotation, which is especially important for the translation of canonical texts. Drayton's method of meaning translation emphasizes that: the translation should always keep the original author in mind, not stick to word correspondence, and allow to reinforce the meaning of the original text, but not change its meaning (Zhu Yuan, 2006). In addition, due to the great difference between Chinese and Western cultures, it is impossible for us to spread Chinese culture to foreign countries without any loss of cultural content by translating the text alone, and the charm of the literary works will be lost if we translate too much directly (Zhou, Liangxun, Geng, 2006). The author believes that meaning should be the guide and the direct translation should be the aid. However, for some unique words in the canonical texts, especially medical and cultural texts, in addition to direct translation and paraphrasing, phonetic translation with annotation is needed to facilitate the understanding of target readers who lack Chinese cultural background.

For the following example analysis, the translator would describe and apply the translation strategies and methods of Chinese agricultural classics through different levels. There are mainly lexical level, syntactic level and stylistic level. Different levels include different aspects.

5. Examples Analysis

5.1. Lexical Level

5.1.1. Agricultural Terms

Here are some unique terms in agricultural texts, such as units of measurement, agricultural terminology, etc. In addition to direct translation and paraphrasing, transliteration with annotation is also needed to facilitate the target readers who lack Chinese background to accept, recognize and the excellent agricultural culture, knowledge, and technology of China, and thus spread the excellent agricultural culture and knowledge of China. When dealing with the terminology of agricultural texts, translators also need the translation strategy of "combination of description and translation". Explanation refers to adding explanations where information is missing in the source text or where information is unclear, logical, or doubtful, to enhance the logic, clarity, and authenticity of the translation (Zhang, Baoguo, Zhou, He, 2018).

Example 1

Source text: 平量五谷各一升，小罍盛，埋垣北墙阴下……—北魏贾思勰《齐民要术·卷二》

Translated version: Peasants measure all kinds of grains by 0.625 kilograms and employ tiny pots to bury them into the shadowy places of Northern walls.

Analysis: Here we need to pay attention to the terminology of agricultural units, not the modern volume unit of one liter, two liters, here refers to a liter of grain, not a volume capacity unit, according to the modern unit of conversion a liter is equal to 1.25 pounds, but the English only kilograms of expression, the translator translated a liter here to 0.625 kg, corresponding to the English unit of measurement. The

translator did not translate "small poppy" directly, but used the common English word "pots", and finally "Into the shadowy" refers to the place where the shade is shaded, the translator treated it as a shadow place, The translator used the words "shadowy places" to realize the correspondence between the two texts and to let English readers understand the meaning.

5.1.2. Translation of Culturally Loaded Words

In a language system, culturally loaded words convey aspects of concepts, culture, ideas, customs, etc. that are unique to a language. These words not only contain rich cultural connotations but also embody a culture in the source language, which is missing in the target language. Therefore, they are often considered as a major obstacle to mutual translation between Chinese and English. Culturally loaded words refer to the parts of a language that cannot be directly translated and have semantic vacancies in another language (Zuo, Chia-Ni, 2014). In other words, Cai Lijian (2020, 183) says that "the translator has to know what he or she is saying and what he or she is doing" and cannot "just find the superficial textual correspondence between two texts, that is, complete the mutual translation."

Example 2

Source text: 盖言秋墙坚实; 土功之时, 一劳永逸, 亦贫家之宝也。—《齐民要术·卷三》

Translated version: While commencing projects such as building palaces, individuals is able to save lots of time and effort because walls in autumn can keep solid. These walls can be considered as the treasure of distressed families.

Analysis: There are two places in this sentence where direct translation is not possible, or where direct translation cannot be understood by the target readers. First, the meaning of the word "earth" cannot be accurately conveyed in the direct translation. However, in the original text, it does not mean this, because the walls are solid or strong, because it saves a lot of energy or time when building with earthwork. Therefore, these two words could not be translated directly, and the translator dealt with them as "commencing projects such as building palaces", and "saving lots of time and effort".

Example 3

Source text: 以忌日种者, 败伤。又用成、收、满、平、定日为佳。—北魏贾思勰《齐民要术·卷四》

Translated version: When the time isn't suitable for plantation, grains failed to reap lots of gains, on the proper time schedule adopted in the Han dynasty, there are a number of gains. These five characters in this sentence are used to emphasize the important plantation time for plants.

Analysis: A culturally loaded word refers to the part of a language that cannot be translated directly. First of all, the words "on the day of death" in this sentence do not mean the jubilee of a person's death, but the inappropriateness or disadvantage of doing something. If the translator adopts the direct translation method, the translation will seriously misinterpret the meaning of the original text. Secondly, "defeated" does not mean "failure and injury", the original text refers to the failure to harvest the grain and the final days of "成, 收, 满, 平, 定", which do not refer to the peace and happiness of life, but to the time cycle used in the Han Dynasty. These words are not translated, and the translation is not necessarily understood by foreign readers. The translator here naturalizes the strategy to facilitate foreign readers' understanding to find the most appropriate counterparts for the above words, not just dead correspondence between the

two languages.

5.2. Syntactic Level

English and Chinese belong to different language systems and each has distinct syntactic features. Chinese has an emphasis on meaning (Parataxis), which focuses on semantics and internal logic and has a loose sentence structure, mostly like bamboo joints, with few connectives. English focuses on Hypotaxis, which emphasizes the logic of sentences and includes long sentence structures such as subject-subject relationships or various subordinate clauses. For “legal, academic, scientific, medical and writing”, translators generally adopt the method of basic direct translation (Liu Miqing, 1988). Basic direct translation refers to the translation of the source text mainly by direct translation, but there is also a small amount of paraphrasing. While direct translation conveys the content and language style of the source text by preserving the form of the source text under the condition that it conforms to the expression norms of the target language, paraphrasing will make some conversions and adopt the same or similar text grids as the original text in the translated language to make up for the fact that the original text cannot be translated directly or the translation will cause ambiguity or lack of meaning, to enhance the plasticity, fluency, and readability of the translated text. The direct translation is the basis of translation, and the Italian translation is the supplement and explanation of the direct translation.

Example 4

Source text: 并州豌豆,度井徑以東,山東穀子,入壺關、上黨,苗而無實。—北魏賈思勰《齊民要術·卷三》

Translated version: Once peas in Bingzhou City (nowadays it refers to Shanxi and Taiyuan) were planted in the east of Jingjing, while Shandong grains cultivated in Huguan and Shangdang of Shanxi City produced lots of leaves and stems but beard no gains.

Analysis: The modern Chinese meaning of this sentence is that the peas produced in Bingzhou were planted to the east of Jingjing, and the grains from Shandong were planted in Huguan and Shangdang in Shanxi, and only the stems and leaves grew but not the fruits. The translator first considers that this is the category of agricultural texts, and for “law, academy, science and technology, medicine and writings”, the translator generally adopts the basic direct translation method (Liu Miqing, 1988), so the translation method of the direct translation will be adopted. On the other hand, the Chinese language focuses on parataxis, which emphasizes semantics and internal logic, with loose sentences, like bamboo sections, and few connecting words. However, the English language emphasizes Hypotaxis, which focuses on the logic of sentences, and the sentences contain long sentence structures such as subject-subordinate relationships or various subordinate clauses, etc. In this case, there is a contrast between the peas of Pingzhou and the grain of Shandong, and the author adds the conjunction “while” to highlight the implied relationship of this sentence.

Example 5

Source text:从冬至日数至来年正月朔日,五十日者,民食足;不满五十日者,日減一斗;有余日,日益一斗。—北魏賈思勰《齊民要術·卷二》

Translated version: Within 50 days from Winter Solstice to the following fifth day of Chinese Lunar January, folks are capable of acquiring enough food, if impossible there will be

a decrease of 6.25 kilograms per day, while there will be an increase of 6.25 kilograms if there are surplus days compared to 50 days.

Analysis: The Chinese textual grid focuses on semantics and internal logic, with few connectives; the English textual grid, on the other hand, focuses on the logic of sentences, which contain long sentence structures such as subject-subordinate relationships or various subordinate clauses. The translator sees that this sentence has two semicolons and three short sentences, but these three sentences are not unrelated. The translator treats the phrase “Within 50 days from the winter solstice to the following fifth day of Chinese Lunar January” as an independent sentence, and the next two short sentences have a contrasting meaning, so he can use the conjunction “if” If the next two phrases have contrasting meanings, the translator can use the conjunction “if impossible” to turn the sentence into a subordinate clause structure, and then use the conjunction while to connect the two sentences, which conforms to the English textual grid and the English expression habits so that the target readers can understand the content of the source text.

5.3. Stylistic Level

Do translation strategies take naturalization or alienation? Ye Zinan (2013:11) has discussed whether to be author-centered or reader-centered in the original and although translators sometimes adopt an author-centered translation strategy, the proportion of such translation is very small. The general principle of canonical translation is that the translator is centered on the target reader, and the target reader's reading experience, i.e., naturalization.

Example 6

Source text:种五谷,以生、长、壮日种者,多实;老、恶、死日种者收薄。—北魏賈思勰《齊民要術·卷四》

Translated version: All kinds of grains would reap lots of gains if they are planted on the time of Yin, Wu, Bin, Yan refers to 3am-5am; Wu means 11am-13pm. While different grains would reap few gains provided that they are grown on the time of Wu, Shen, Kui, Wu refers to 19 pm-21 pm; Shen means 15 pm-17 pm.

Analysis: For “legal, academy, scientific, medical and written texts”, translators generally adopt the method of basic direct translation (Liu Miqing, 1988). Basic direct translation refers to the translation of the source text mainly by direct translation, which conveys the content and language style of the source text by preserving the form of the source text while conforming to the expression standard of the target language. In the source text, “生、老、壮” refers to the time when the grain grows, if it is directly treated as “born, grow and strong”, only the word correspondence is achieved, and the translation fails to accurately convey the meaning of the original text. The translator translates these times separately so that the target readers can immediately understand the time of grain cultivation, not the conditions or environment of grain cultivation; “老、恶、死” also refers to the time of plant cultivation, if directly treated as “old, evil and dying,” “老和死” refers to the withering of plants or crops, and “恶” refers to the harshness of the environment, so the translator uses a direct translation with a commentary to deal with it as “Wu refers to 19 pm-21 pm; Shen means 15 pm-17 pm”, aiming to achieve the level of equivalence between the two texts.

6. Conclusion

In terms of the principles of translation of agricultural classics, translators should try to make the target readers get the same reading experience and reading response as the readers of the source text when translating agricultural texts, and it is an important translation principle for Chinese culture to go out and transmit the excellent Chinese traditional culture to foreign countries so that the target readers who lack Chinese cultural background or insufficient cultural background can understand, accept and recognize the excellent Chinese traditional culture. A translation that can achieve “elegance” can stimulate the emotional resonance of the target readers’ hearts, giving them textual and emotional enjoyment and spiritual contentment (Chen, Hongwei, and Li, Yadan, 2018). “Righteousness”, “Body”, and “Qi” serve as the platform for translation practice and translation criticism.

Throughout the translation of Chinese and Western classics, foreign translators have adopted “naturalization” as the dominant means of translation to translate Chinese canonical texts; most Chinese translators also use “naturalization” as the dominant means of translation to translate Chinese canonical texts. (Su Xiaoliang, 2022). The advantage of naturalization is that it reduces the lengthy and redundant text and makes the translation more fluent, natural and vivid, and more understandable, and acceptable to the target readers; however, with the significant improvement of China’s international status and the enhancement of its discourse, Chinese culture is accepted and learned by more foreign readers, the method of dissimilation is gradually becoming mainstream in the foreign translation of canonical texts (Zhou Siyu, Cao Qinqin, 2019). Translation strategies to naturalize or dissimilate? Ye Zinan (2013:11) has discussed whether the original author-centered or reader-centered approach is adopted, and although translators sometimes adopt the original author-centered translation strategy, the proportion of this translation method is very small. The general principle of translating canonical texts is that the translator focuses on the target reader and the target reader’s reading experience, i.e., naturalization. “Naturalization” is still the mainstream method of translating canonical texts, because naturalized translations are easier to be accepted, understood, recognized, and exchanged by foreign readers who lack Chinese cultural background or cultural background, thus realizing the purpose of humanistic exchange and culture-oriented communication among countries. If the translation is oriented to alienation, the readers will not be able to read and thus lose interest in reading, and if the target readers are not willing to read the English translation, the translation of the canonical texts will lose the value of spreading culture. Therefore, the author believes that in translating agricultural texts, naturalization should be adopted as the main focus, supplemented by alienation. At the same time, the translator needs the translation strategy of a “combination of description and translation”. The term “exposition” refers to the addition of explanations where information in the source text is missing or unclear, or where logic is unclear or doubtful, in order to enhance the logic, clarity, and authenticity of the translation. In addition, the translator must read the English literature of the foreign translation of the canonical texts, analyze the corresponding terms or meanings in the translated English, and choose appropriate translation strategies to convey the meaning and flavor of the original text (Wang, Hong, 2013). In terms of translation methods, agricultural texts belong to

the category of scientific and technical texts, and translators generally adopt the translation method based on direct translation, i.e., direct translation is the main method in translating the source text, but a small amount of translation exists, but there are some unique vocabulary and culturally loaded words in the canonical texts, especially in the case of scientific and technical canonical texts, in addition to direct translation and translation, phonetic translation with annotation is also needed to facilitate the understanding of target readers who lack Chinese background, so as to spread Chinese excellent traditional culture.

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