

On the Translation of Cultural Image of Li Ziqi's Videos on YouTube

Wenting Zhang

Guangxi University for Nationalities Guangxi Nanning 530000

Abstract: Short videos have become the carrier of cultural dissemination in recent years. Li Ziqi, who uses traditional Chinese food, crafts, and culture as the video theme, got the Guinness World Record for the most subscriptions on YouTube Chinese channel in 2021. In order to reduce language barriers in overseas communication, there are English translations added in videos' title and introduction. Because of different cultural backgrounds, the choice of translation strategies must consider the linguistic, cultural, and spiritual levels. Analyzing the Li Ziqi videos' style and C-E translation text, it found that rewriting, omitting, and adding methods will supplement or reduce cultural connotations.

Keywords: Cultural image; Li Ziqi; Overseas communication; YouTube

1. Introduction

With the development of online social software in the 21st century, social media platforms have become the main media between cultures communication and information updating. Some social software such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram those have billions visits in the world. Short video social software such as Kuaishou, Douyin, Tik Tok (international version of Douyin) have occupied domestic and foreign markets. Tik Tok is popular with young people in Southeast Asia, North America, South America, Europe and other regions. Short videos have become the carrier of cultural output in recent years. In 2018, Tik Tok officially announced that in global the number of monthly active users exceeded 500 million (Zhou, 2019: 151). YouTube is the largest video-based social platform and the channel for information and culture transmission in the 21st century. According to the "Visual Network Index Global Mobile Data Traffic Update Report 2017-2022" released by Cisco in February 2019, it is predicted that by 2022, video will account for 82% of all internet traffic. And the influence of video content will keep increasing, then has a great influence in the international communication pattern (Sui, 2020: 78).

The short video with entertainment functions promotes overseas development of Chinese culture, and is deeply liked by young people. Li Ziqi, a representative figure, whose video concretizes China's landscape and pastoral dreams, rooted in traditional Chinese culture, from clothes to food, from scenery to music with Chinese elements. Her excellent labor skills attracted countless foreign fans. Till now her account has 15.3 million followers on YouTube. These videos show more Chinese things and shape the image of the East through folk channels. The influence even surpasses the Confucius Institutes and cultural exchange activities officially established by the government. The English text in Li Ziqi's video mainly focuses on title and video introduction. Because of its unique network dissemination power, the high-quality video with active translation can improve overseas promotion of Chinese culture. So the author analyzes the translation method to observe Chinese culture behind Li Ziqi's video, and to come up with some suggestions.

2. Literature Review

A major feature of language is cultural image. Cultural image is the symbol of a nation, which has a relatively fixed and unique cultural meaning. It's also the crystallization of wisdom and cultural precipitation of various nations. Xie (1999: 85) pointed out that cultural image "has a close relationship with the legends and the early totem worship of various ethnic groups". Cultural image, a cultural symbol, produced in a specific environment. It is the combination of imagery and culture, which has concise features and unique cultural connotations (Gu 2011: 74). Hou (1998: 96-102) believes that cultural image is composed of two parts: physical image and connotation. Gu (2011) thought cultural image is intertextual, not isolated linguistic signs. This proves the translatability of cultural images, however the translatability is restricted by the cultural matrix, which can easily take obstacles in translation activities. Image with strong symbolic and emotional significance is a representation of a relatively stable psychological structure, which focuses on traditional national culture (Yan 2000: 88). Colors have different meanings in different cultures. "Red" means auspicious and prosperous in Chinese culture. However in the west countries, the color is regarded as violence. Image is mostly limited to the cultural cognition of the nationality. So it will become hard situations in other countries and cultures. All translation activities are essentially mediation between the two cultures. The ideal translation description should take into account the two related cultures (Zhang 2007: 74). Cheng (2006: 143-147) explored several cultural images in literary translation from the perspective of medio translatology. Li, He (2006: 40) analyzed the cultural loss in translation in the view of relevance theory. It believed that the cultural loss in translation was the misunderstanding of the same image in two cultural cognition. Whether the translator do the correct contextual assumptions

or not, cultural loss is inevitable, even changes the communicative intentions in the original text.

Nowadays, translation studies no longer pay attention to information, even translators have duty on cultural communication. This requires the translator to not only master language knowledge, also to transform well between the two cultural environments of SL and TL. Cultural translation is an important way for China to build image in the world, and it has a huge effect on national cultural self-confidence and the international cultural stage.

3. Strategies of Cultural Images in Li Ziqi's Videos

Till now, "Liziqi" account has 15.3 million subscriptions on YouTube. The reasons for its influence are as follows. First of all, she "labeled" and "concretized" Chinese rural landscape life, which provide a way for the West to view East. And she also embodied the "landscape" that the Chinese have longed to pursue for thousands of years. Secondly, she recorded rural life as a farmer, focusing on "isolated" pastoral figures without official features. This increase the sense of intimacy and identification with people. Furthermore, video production is superb, the music and scenes are delicatd. Each audience could enjoy the beautiful nature in her videos. After sorting out 125 videos of "Liziqi" in YouTube, the author found that the translation activities mainly consist of adding, omitting, and rewriting three strategies:

3.1 Adding: to fill cultural gaps

Due to different language and culture, Li Ziqi's videos are mainly about words with cultural meaning and images. Therefore, when appearing cultural vacancies, adding is the first step to complete the information. For example, in the video "Pen, Ink, Paper, Inkstone" on March 25th, 2019, they were translated as "calligraphy brushes, ink, paper, and inksticks." Calligraphy is one of the six arts of gentleman in ancient China, and these tools do not exist in the Western world. The addition of "calligraphy brush" in the translation takes into account the cultural differences. Foreign netizens can understand the unique Chinese history and culture by a word. Although calligraphy brushes, ink, paper, and inksticks are concrete things, they carried the demeanor of ancient literati, and embodies the elegance of art. In the video collections, "Eat at the Right Time" has an introduction in literal translation with "Our ancestors have followed the solar terms to work since ancient times", which translated "That's how our ancestors followed the 24 solar terms to plant and harvest". "Solar terms" refers to the traditional lunar calendar. Meteorology is divided into 24 solar terms according to the climate of four seasons. Each term is about 15 days that remind people not miss the farming time. The translation here supplements the "24" to express China's unique diachronic algorithm, which is different from the other ones. And showing the Chinese farming styles and more sophisticated agricultural work. The video on April 1st, 2020, "March 3rd, "Shangsi Girl's Day" is a traditional Chinese festival. In the ancient, the day was a bathing day, which meant could keep jinxes away. People went to the waterside to bathe together, prepared sacrificing banquets and picnic in spring. In the video, following the traditional customs to cook flower rice for outing, and have a feast near the waterside. According to the ST, "March 3rd" will be regarded as "March 3rd" of the international algorithm. But "March 3rd" is the third day of March in the Chinese lunar calendar. The actual festival is in April, so the translation added "March 3rd of the lunar calendar". And the sentence "Hello April!" at the end of the text, which is not mentioned in the original text. All of additions are try to reduce the misunderstandings of source language.

3.2 Omitting: to improve readers' acceptance

Most of the titles in Li Ziqi's videos chose to reduce information, mainly in the form of phrases and vocabulary. After omitting foreign netizens can easy to get topic, also avoid complex sentences and increase acceptance. However this method also easily lead to the neglect of cultural implication. For example, the Chinese title of the Spring Festival in 2019 is literally translated "full of blessings and reunion dishes, full of good fortune as one wishes and happy year". But the English title is directly translated as "Spring Festival dish", which seems to be simple and clear in visual for target language audiences. If both "full of blessings" and "good fortune" are translated faithfully, it will increase the difficulty of understanding for foreigners. However, the author think that the "Spring festival dish" didn't convey the special meaning of Chinese "family reunion dinner". The reunion dinner is on the Eve of Spring festival. The night is important for each Chinese family to sit together for dinner. The word "dish" does not have the meaning of "reunion dinner" or "New Year's Eve dinner". Naturally, overseas netizens who are not familiar with Chinese festivals can hardly understand why a meal is so grand.

On August 23th, 2019, the title "Hang a lantern for viewing flowers and moon, matching the whole yellow peach snacks.", which original text is full of Mid-Autumn Festival character, translated in "peach dishes". First, the poetic picture in Chinese was disappeared. Secondly, "peach" is described ordinary pink peaches. However yellow peach is a different variety, which taste sourer and crisper than the ordinary. It is easy to be canned, jam, and preserved fruit. So it's better to translated "yellow peach dishes" for more details. But the English omitted so much information that overseas fans would miss some interesting things. Like "moon shadow lantern" created in Sui Dynasty, which has special silhouette or stickers on the surface. Even there are several views about lantern in the video, people still can ignore because of the short title.

The Dragon Boat Festival video with total of 13,401,181 views focused on how to make Zongzi. The title "Dragon boat pillow Zongzi" is translated into "Dragon boat zongzi", and the word "pillow" is omitted. Pillow Zongzi originated in Guangxi and named by the shape. The materials usually are glutinous rice and meat. This information is omitted in the translation. Then "Zongzi" is transliteration in Chinese. but none of an introduction about Zongzi and the relation with Chinese Dragon Boat Festival. So it's not easy for foreigners to get the theme of the video, and ultimately just stay in the "picture". The author looked at the comments and found that users who come from China has become the volunteer to explain some details in Liziqi's video. A user "Ling Zhou" commented an introduction in English of dragon boats and Zongzi. In this comment, many audiences left a message to express their thanks for his explanation. One user "flamingpie herman" commented as follows: "It helps us understand what she's doing and why. I really wish she could use English subtitles for the rest of the world so we'd understand her better." For overseas audiences, it's important to show more details for cultural communications. Otherwise all of impression are about beautiful pictures and music.

3.3 Rewriting: to convey sentence meaning

Rewriting means to achieve functional consistency between languages and cultures, translators can actively rewrite to facilitate readers' understanding. Rewriting in Li Ziqi's video mostly cause lossing of cultural images. Chinese Lunar New Year in 2021, the title "Tomorrow is New Year's Eve, hang lanterns, paste couplets, and prepare goods for New Year" translated into "Chinese New Year's decorations, goods and snacks". The words are collectively referred to as decoration. However, couplets, blessings, and lanterns are not just decorations in Chinese culture. The implications of them represent the auspicious to the whole nation. These concrete images are closely related to the legends of the Chinese nation mentioned by Xie, and they have fixed and unique cultural connotation. However, "decorations, goods, snakes" in English dose not have implications of "lanterns, couplets, firecrackers". Finally foreign netizens those are unfamiliar to Chinese culture may only reach a surface cognition after watching the videos..

"May the string of red persimmons send 2020 away, hope to bring all of you thousands of persimmons and many good persimmons in the new year." is the end of video's Chinese introduction on December 9th, 2020. After translating, the sentence rewrote that "May the red, red persimmons see the old year out, And bring all of you a happy, prosperous new year!" In Chinese, "persimmon" and "matter" are homophonic. So Chinese usually use "persimmon" to metaphor blessing. They are often chosen in Chinese paintings that means everything goes well. Also persimmons are in golden red, which like small red lanterns. In China, red lanterns are also the symbol of wishes. But it's hard to keep the language form in English. Foreign netizens have a difficulty to understand why "persimmons" can be associated with "happy" and "prosperous". Sometimes same things represent different meanings in different cultures. If the culture image cannot be directly transmitted, rewriting in translation is needed.. In Chinese, the form of four-character words is always translated meaning in other language. The format, structure, and tone are difficult to faithfully translate. New Year's Eve dinner on February 11st, 2019, a sentence consisted of four-character words in Chinese with the meaning of "blessing", "luck", "fortune" and "health". The translation rewrote "Wish you a happy new year with 'laughter and cheer', with 'fortune and success', 'health and wealth', 'all the best my dear'." It is not only keeping the meaning of "wishes" in the original text consistent, also using the parallel structure of conjunction "and" as close as possible to original form. So rewriting plays an important role of improving the coherence and smoothness of sentences, especially on cultural communication and reducing difficulties between languages..

4. Conclusion

On February 2nd, 2021, with 14.1 million YouTube subscriptions, Li Ziqi set the Guinness World Record of "the most subscriptions on YouTube Chinese channels". She becomes a successful model for overseas promotion of Chinese culture. However, when reviewing the comments, many netizens have asked and communicated about the content of the screen because of some difficult information. One is the video has not been fully translated on YouTube, the subtitles are still in Chinese, which has language difficulties for foreign netizens. The second is about English translation, which did not cover the "details", mostly reduce "Chinese things" to ensure the acceptance of foreigners. The author believes that short videos should adopt an active translation strategy, reducing omissions and deletions, adding more supplementary information. Good translation can promote the output of short videos in overseas Chinese culture.

References:

- [1] Cheng Yin. On several cultural phenomena in literary translation from the perspective of Medio-translatology[J]. *Journal of the Lanzhou University(Social Science)*, 2006(2): 143-147.
- [2] Ding Wanying. Discussion on Overseas Transmission of Chinese Traditional Culture in the We-Media Environment: Taking YouTube Li Ziqi's High Viewing videos as the example[J]. *New Media Research*, 2020,6(24):88-90.
- [3] Fang Jing, Guo Jirong. Research on the Translatability of Cultural Image from the Perspective of Family Resemblance[J]. *Foreign Language Education*, 2017,38(06):94-99.
- [4] Gu Jianmin. The Intertextuality and Translation of Cultural Images from the Perspective of Relevance Theory[J]. *Foreign Language Education*, 2011,32(05):110-113.
- [5] Jia Dejiang. The Cultural Connotation and Translation of English and Chinese Words [J]. *Foreign Language and Their Teaching*, 2000(02):30-32.
- [6] Jia Dejiang. On the Influence of Cultural Factors on English-Chinese Translation[J]. *Foreign Language Education*, 2000(02):56-61.
- [7] Lefevere, Andrew. Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame[M]. London and New York: Routledge, 1992.
- [8] Li Zhanxi. Cultural Loss in Cultural Image Translation from the Perspective of Relevance Thoery[J]. *Foreign Language and Their Teaching*, 2006(2): 40-43
- [9] Liu Pu. The Influence of Short Videos on the Spread of Chinese and Western Cultures: Based on Li Ziqi's short videos[J]. *Journal of News Research*, 2020,11(01):221+223.
- [10] Nida, E. A. *Toward a Science of Translating*[M]. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964: 159.
- [11] Qi Mengying. *Research on the International Communication Strategy of Short Video We-Media in China*[D]. Beijing Foreign Studies University, 2020.
- [12] Sui Luyi. Analysis of the Communication Power of YouTube Social Influencers: Taking Li Ziqi's Popularity as an example[J]. *International communication*, 2020(01):78-87.
- [13] Xie Tianzhen. *Medio-Translatology*[M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 1999.
- [14] Yan Zhifen. The Superposition of Classical Poetry Images and the Accumulation of National Cultural Traditions[J]. *Journal of South-Central University for Nationalities(Humanities and Social Sciences)*. 2000(4): 85-88.
- [15] Zhang Xu. The Poetics of Transmissting Cultural Images in Zhu Xiang's Poetry Translation[J]. *Journal of PLA Foreign Language Institute*, 2007(04):73-77.