On the English Translation of Cultural Relics in Inner Mongolia Museum—From the Perspective of Translation Approach as Adaptation and Selection

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Abstract—**This paper introduces the Chinese to English (C-E) translation of cultural relics, which is an important part of China's global communication. This paper discusses the C-E translation of cultural relics from the approach to translation as adaptation and selection, which liberates translators from the previous confinement that limits translators to either source-text oriented or target-text oriented, and has provided a new perspective to translation, as well as the translation for China's global communication. By this theory, the authors analyze parts of the C-E translation of cultural relics in the Inner Mongolia Museum with an expectation to show the current situation of the C-E translation of cultural relics and provide possible feasible suggestions for this kind of translation activities.**

Index Terms—**translation approach as adaptation and selection, C-E translation of cultural relics, Inner Mongolia Museum, translation for China's global communication**

I. Definition of the Translation for China's Global Communication

"Communication" can be divided into "domestic communication" and "global communication" by the regions they cover and targets they aim at. From its name, it is obvious that "domestic communication" is a kind of communication targeting at specific region, which can be a province, a city, a town, or more frequently, a country. Strictly speaking, "global communication" is defined as a communication targeting at overseas area by the State Council Information Office. There are great differences between domestic communication and global communication. Firstly, it is the difference of the languages; secondly, it is the difference of the beneficiaries because of the different living methods, customs, values as well as ideology of different cultures. All those have led to the difficulty to control and evaluate the effect of global communication over domestic communication.

An outstanding feature of the translation for China's global communication is the translation from Chinese to other languages, which is to translate numerous information about China in various aspects into other languages, and publish and spread the information through media like books, journals, newspaper, broadcasting, television, and internet, etc., as well as some international conferences and exhibitions. This feature asks for that not only all the translation works to be "faithful, expressive, elegant", but also the translators to be familiar with the principles of "Three Approaches in Global Communication" (which are approaching to China's developing reality, approaching to foreign beneficiaries' requirements to China's information, and approaching to foreign beneficiaries' thinking modes) (Huang Youyi, 2004, p.27-28).

Cultural relics in China are greatly important to the protection of historical storage, and are the remaining evidence for Chinese ancient glory. The C-E translation of cultural relics plays an important role in spreading the cultural connotations to other parts of the world, thus it is an essential component to the translation for China's global communication.

II. General Principles of the C-E Translation of Cultural Relics

Peter Newmark (2001, p.13) combines linguistic functions with translation together. He allocates various kinds of text genres into expressive text, informative text and vocative text, and clearly indicates that the main functions of language are expressive, informative and vocative. He further allocates various types of literature into those three functions, just as the following table shows:

Function	Expressive	Informative		Vocative
Core	Writer	'Truth'		Readership
Author's status	'Scared'	'Anonymous'		'Anonymous'
Type		Topic	*Format*	
	Serious imaginative literature Authoritative statements Autobiography Personal correspondence	Scientific Technological Commercial Industrial Economic Other areas of knowledge or events	*Textbook* *Report* *Paper* *Article* *Memo* *Minutes*	Notices Instructions Propaganda Publicity Popular fiction

(Jia Wenbo, 2005, p.54-55)

However, in actual operations, there is seldom any text that has only one kind of the above functions, and the majority of the texts are based on one function, while also include other kinds of functions. It can be noticed that the texts of the translation for China's global communication can be classified into all the three texts. Anyway, based on the features of cultural relics, which are logical and fact-oriented, the names of cultural relics are mainly informative.

Apart from the principles that all the C-E translation should follow, the C-E translation of cultural relics has its uniqueness for its cultural connotations and nationality. Shi Xinmin (2007, p.62) sums up four principles for the C-E translation of cultural relics according to the features of the names of cultural relics.

Firstly, the principle of nationality. Chinese history is very long while Chinese culture is profound, and the cultural relics in different times have their own characteristics. They are treasures not only for China, but also for the whole world. Thus, the C-E translation of cultural relics must be nationality-oriented so as to reflect the cultural connotations and features. Though there are few corresponding expressions in English, they are important to show the national characteristics.

Secondly, the principle of brevity. The translation of cultural relics should be brief and concise. Besides, the acceptability of Western audience should also be concerned, so the translation should also be self-explained, otherwise, it will affect audience's understanding.

Thirdly, the principle of information. The proper names of cultural relics are always embedded with some information, namely the direct or indirect illustration to those cultural relics. The nouns of these kinds are clear in meaning and practical. Thus, the translation of these names should also follow the features in Chinese version without keeping it too long or tedious, only in this way can the translation be convenient to communication.

Lastly, the principle of back translation. The so-called back translation principle refers to the closeness in form and structure between English translation and Chinese names to the greatest extend. In this way, Chinese audience or readers can come up with their Chinese expressions by seeing the English translation of those cultural relics. This is the achievement of dual transformation of information.

III.   ANALYSIS OF TRANSLATION APPROACH AS ADAPTATION AND SELECTION

When translating, translators adapt and select. This is a well-known fact, which is often mentioned in the literature. For example, Eugene Nida says that "A translator must engage in thousands of decisions involving both selection and arrangement to fit another culture, a different language, diverse editors and publishers, and finally a reading audience" (2000, p.7). And Peter Newmark says that "Translation theory is concerned with choices and decisions, not with the mechanics of either the source language text… or the target language text" (2001, p.19). Since adaptation, selection and decision-making permeate through translating activities, an approach combining them all may also lead to better and more conscious translation practices.

According to Hu Gengshen's definition, a "translational eco-environment" refers to "the world of the source text and the source/target languages, including the linguistic, communicative, cultural and social aspects of translating, as well as the author, the client, and the readers". Focusing on the activity of translation, especially in terms of the "translational eco-environment", the translation is here defined as "a selection activity of the translator's adaptation to fit the translational eco-environment" (2008a, p.1).

In the triangle of "source text----translator----target text", the "translator" is the subject, while both "source text" and "target text" are the objects. According to Darwinian principles of "natural selection" and "survival of the fittest", it is only the "organic beings" (animals and plants) who have the ability to adapt themselves to the environment. In translating, only a translator is an "organic being" who can adapt to the eco-environment, and since adaptation and selection in translating are taken by translators, it therefore seems that Darwinian principles of adaptation and selection might also be applicable to the translating process. (Hu Gengshen, 2008b, p.90)

In the translating process, the translator must adapt to the translational eco-environment in order to be able to select specific target texts. Within the theoretical framework of translation as adaptation and selection, the process of translation is a production of target texts by "natural" selection by means of the translator's adaptation to translational eco-environment and the translator's selection of both the degree of the adaptation and decision about the form of the final target text in terms of Darwinian principle of natural selection. The process of translation comprises two stages: (1)

The translational eco-environment "selects" the translator; and (2) the translator (who stands for the translational eco-environment) selects or decides the form of the final target text.

The identity of the translator is important for a description of the process of translation in the eco-environment. In the first stage, the main emphasis is on the selection of him or her because he or she is not a prior part of the translational eco-environment. In the second stage, his or her identity has changed and he or she has adapted to and accepted the constraints in the translational eco-environment. At this stage, the translator is not only an important component of the eco-environment, but also the person who rules the eco-environment by making decision and selecting the form of the final target text. Thus, the translator has a dual identity in the process of translation.

This eco-environment, then, comprises the world of the source text and the source/target languages, the linguistic and cultural aspect of translating, and the person involved. Within this theoretical framework, the translation is the production of target texts by "natural" selection through the translator's adaptation to the eco-environment and the translator's selection of both the adaptation and the final-target text in terms of Darwin's natural selection.

This verbal description can be expressed in a formula:

Process of Translation = Translator's Adaptation (to the translational eco-environment) + Translator's Selection (to select the degree of adaptation to the translational eco-environment + to select the form of the final target text)

This formula can be simplified to: Translation= Adaptation + Selection

This is, literally, translation as adaptation and selection (Hu Gengshen, 2004, p.225-226).

This formula is further developed by Liu Yafeng according to the situation of the translation for China's global communication: Translation for China's Global Communication = Adaptation + Selection (2009, p.55). Accordingly, the C-E translation of cultural relics can also be set into this formula: C-E Translation of Cultural Relics = Adaptation + Selection.

When translating the names of cultural relics into English, the translator should adapt to the following factors:

Firstly, linguistic factors. Linguistics is the basis for translation, so the prior concern of translation must be linguistic factors. According to the illustration in previous sections, the proper names for cultural relics belong to the informative text because of their logical, formal and fact-oriented features. When the translator does translating, the formal meaning of the text as well as the social and cultural factors should be concerned with special attention. So are the principles of information, nationality and brevity emphasized.

Secondly, non-linguistic factors. In this respect, the factors like the readers, their ideology and the purpose should be taken into account. The Bible has the various versions of translation in different languages so as to cater to the different requirements of readers, whether they are well-educated or not. The mainstream of the ideology in English-speaking countries also controls the C-E translation of cultural relics. While the purpose of the C-E translation of cultural relics is obvious: to spread Chinese history and culture to other parts of the world, and the adaptation to this factor also asks for special treatment during translation.

Accordingly, the translator should make decisions and select proper translating methods to achieve the best translation for cultural relics.

From the macro-level, the translator should always choose between foreignization strategy and domestication strategy, and between literal translation and free translation. This is a long disputed question. From the approach of translation as adaptation and selection, whether foreignization or domestication, literal translation or free translation, it can be taken as the selection of translating strategies by the translator so as to adapt to the translational eco-environment. Since the approach is neither from the angle of the author/source text, nor from the angle of the reader/target text, but from the view of the translator, the translation strategies adopted should be chosen for the best. The translator should not be limited to any translating method so as to adapt to the translational eco-environment, and make sure the survival of the translated version.

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE C-E TRANSLATION OF CULTURAL RELICS IN INNER MONGOLIA MUSEUM

Inner Mongolia Museum was firstly built in the year of 1957. As the first museum in the autonomous region, Inner Mongolia Museum has played its role well in displaying the culture of national minorities. In 2007, the new museum was completed to welcome the 60th anniversary of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. The displaying items are further enriched with a clearer classification, and the C-E translation of those cultural relics is also renewed accordingly. Cultural relics in Inner Mongolia Museum differ from those in other museums in China because of their reflection to the special cultural phenomena in Inner Mongolia, thus the translation should also be taken specially and carefully.

According to the features of the translation for China's global communication and the uniqueness of names of cultural relics, the C-E translation of cultural relics should also follow a set of principles.

Firstly, the adaptability of the C-E translation of cultural relics. "Adaptation" is a natural tendency for the translator during translating activities. In the ternary relation of "source text----translator---target text", the translator is centered, and the "adaptation" during translation is dual based on the translator. The translation must fit in all the elements in the two languages. The "one-way adaptation" to the source text only or to the target text only is unimaginable. (Fang Zhongnan, 2006, p.116)

A lot of containers or articles in ancient China are hardly used currently, so their names are also difficult to recognize because of the complexion in writing and strangeness in pronunciation even for Chinese natives. Therefore, the

difficulty to understand them for foreigners is quite obvious. For example, Jade *Cong* (玉琮) is a kind of jade instrument for sacrifice, especially in Shang and Zhou dynasties; Pottery *Dou* (陶豆) is a kind of pottery food container with a shallow plate and high foot, and is also popular in Shang and Zhou dynasties; Pottery *Zeng* (陶甑) is a kind of round pottery steamer with a square or round hole at the bottom for cooking, which is frequently seen at the relics of Yangshao culture; Bronze *Nao* (青铜铙) is a kind of bronze percussion instrument; Bronze handled *You* (铜提梁卣) is an important wine vessel in the Bronze age. Examples of these kinds are ubiquitous in China's museums. Those instruments or articles played an important role in our ancestors' lives, and they are also unique in Chinese culture. When it is hard to find a direct equivalence in English, proper explanations are necessary. According to the translations in the National Museum of China, all those names are transliterated by their pronunciations in Pinyin, and the notes for their usage will be followed. Take "陶豆" as an example, it is translated as "Pottery *Dou* (food container)", while other examples are treated in the same way. This is a good way to adapt to both Chinese culture and Western culture, and the audience or readers can easily understand those cultural relics by the explanations. However, in Inner Mongolia Museum, notes are not clearly labeled, which may be one aspect for further improvement.

Secondly, the selection of the C-E translation of cultural relics. During the C-E translation of cultural relics in museums, the selection of the translator is not completely free or random. The names for cultural relics are informative and fact-oriented; there are sets of rules for the naming of those cultural relics in Chinese, thus there should also be rules for the corresponding translations. Generally speaking, the English translations of cultural relics should follow the same pattern. For example, the notes for the items of cultural relics will include contents like the name, the time, the unearthed time and place, as well as some explanatory information. Thus, the English translation should also include all those information and follow the same form.

However, the translator of cultural relics also has the right to decide on the different versions of translation even for the same term. For example, the difference has been shown to the translation of "带盖" (*DaiGai*, with a cover). One of the cultural relics in Inner Mongolia Museum is named "妇好带盖铜方彝" which is unearthed from the tomb of "Fuhao" in Shang Dynasty in Anyang, Henan province. It is a wine container with a cover on it, just as the name for it. Another item is named "铜带盖盨". "盨" (*Xu*) is a food container that always has a cover on it. In Inner Mongolia Museum, the translations for them are "Fuhao square *yi* and cover" and "Bronze lidded *xu*" respectively. Though treated differently with the term "带盖", they have achieved the same effect in expressing the meaning. However, from the perspective of reader-friendliness, the authors get them improved as "Fuhao square *Yi* (wine container) with cover" and "Bronze lidded *Xu* (food container)".

Thirdly, the uniformity and normalization of the C-E translation of cultural relics. This point has already been mentioned in the previous two sections. The C-E translation of cultural relics is not done at random, and should be uniform and normalized throughout the museum, and even throughout the country. The problems of this kind are not difficult to be found in Inner Mongolia Museum. For example, there are some pottery articles with three feet, like "三足陶壶" and "三足陶钵". Some of them are translated as "Pottery pot" and "Pottery bowl", while some others are translated as "Tripod pottery pot" and "Tripod pottery bowl", and obviously, the latter versions are better to reflect the full names of those items.

Porcelains are also important articles for China, and even now, they are still popular on the market. They are beautiful because of the colored glaze and various designs and patterns, which can also been shown by the various vases in Inner Mongolia Museum. Qingbai glazed (青白釉) vase, Celadon glazed (青釉)vase, White glazed (白釉) vase and Dark glazed (褐釉)vase are all collected in the museum, but as to the unity and normalization of all those translations, improvements should still be made.

Fourthly, the accuracy of the C-E translation of cultural relics. Because of the informative nature of the names of cultural relics, the C-E translation of cultural relics must be accurate to express the content of those names. For example, an item on display in Inner Mongolia Museum is named "石夯锤"，which is a pounder made of stone, so a proper translation for it can be "Stone pounder". However, the translation in the museum is "Stone pounds a hammer", which seems to be a little far away from the actual item.

Another item on display is named "镂空花鸟纹玉饰", which is a piercing jade with flower and bird design for decoration, so a proper translation might be "The piercing jade ornament with flower and bird design". While the translation in the museum is "The jade adorns painting of flowers and birds in traditional Chinese style lines". Several concepts like "painting" and "traditional Chinese style lines" may be confusing to the readers both at home and abroad because of its inaccuracy.

The item named "褐釉剔牡丹鹿纹梅瓶" is also a precious relic in the museum, and similar items can also be found in the National Museum of China. "剔花" is a traditional but special decoration technique for porcelains, so this vase is also a typical example for the extraordinary technique in our ancestors' porcelain-making. A proper translation for this item can be "Dark glazed vase incised with peony and deer design". The translation in Inner Mongolia Museum is "Western Glazed Vase with Peony and Deer Design", which is not accurate enough as some important details are neglected.

Lastly, the historic and cultural nature of the C-E translation of cultural relics. Cultural relics bear the characteristics

to reflect China's history and ancient culture, so the historic and cultural nature of the C-E translation of cultural relics is also important. Inner Mongolia Museum has its specialty for a lot of items on display which are not only the representation to the history and culture of China, but also more specifically the history and culture of national minorities, so special attentions should be paid when translating the cultural relics with particular historic and cultural connotations.

For example, "四子王旗王府卫队乘马牌" is on show in the museum, but the translation of the name is obviously inaccurate, as "Take advantage of that horse plate". "Riding a horse" is not "taking advantage of a horse", and some other important details are also omitted. Here, a better translated version might be "Horse-riding plaque of the prince guard of Siziwang Banner".

Another example is an item named "景教十字纹铜牌", which is translated into "Nestorian bronze plaque with swastika design". This translation is a good example, for it has got all the details and cultures reflected. "景教" (Nestorianism) is regarded as the earliest Christian denomination that was spread to China during the Tang Dynasty, while "swastika" is exactly the name for the design. Thus, it is fairly good for this translation fully to show the content, as well as the history and culture in it.

V. CONCLUSION

The C-E translation of cultural relics, as an important component of the translation for China's global communication follows the general principles of the latter. However, its uniqueness asks for special attentions when translating. This paper starts out from a comparatively new perspective of translation theory - Hu Gengshen's translation approach as adaptation and selection, which emphasizes on: 1) translation to adapt to the translational eco-environment; 2) selecting the final form of the target text when translating; 3) translators' dual identity in the translating process. This theory liberates translators from the set pattern to stick to some kind of translating strategy or method. To achieve the best result of translation, every strategy or method that is best in treating the context and situation should be employed. Accordingly, the formula of the "C-E translation of Cultural Relics = Adaptation + Selection" is deduced.

Based on the theoretical framework, the adaptability, selection, uniformity and normalization, accuracy as well as the historic and cultural nature of the C-E translation of cultural relics are discussed with translated examples from Inner Mongolia Museum.

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