

Research on the Translation of Han Embroidery Culture Based on Four-Word Expressions

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Abstract: As a local Embroidery, the development and inheritance of Han embroidery have attracted more and more attention in the field, but most of the relevant materials do not have English translations, and very few scholars have studied the English translation of Han embroidery culture up to now. This paper explained the current situation of Han embroidery culture, adopted the method of textual analysis to interpret the cultural connotation of the four words expressions in Han Embroidery Culture and focused on more suitable translation strategies and better translation versions. Finally, this paper emphasized the great significance of delivering the cultural connotation in the translation research of Han embroidery culture.

Keywords: Han Embroidery Culture Translation, Four-Word Expression, Translation Strategies

1. Introduction

Originating from Chu embroidery 2300 years ago, Han embroidery is centred in Wuhan and is a regional embroidery covering Hubei province. It developed to its peak in the late Qing and early Min Dynasty. [1] Han embroidery works have been exhibited in Beijing many times, and have participated in international exhibitions such as Paris and Warsaw, which are well received. In 1910 and 1915, Han embroidery products won the gold medal at the Nanyang Games and Panama International Expo. And thus, Han embroidery, together with Su embroidery and Xiang embroidery, became the top 10 embroideries in China. [2]

Since Han embroidery culture joined the Chinese intangible cultural heritage list in 2008, its development and inheritance have attracted more and more attention in this field. In 2011, the Han embroidery base was established in Tan Hualin, a cultural landmark area of Wuhan. In 2013, the first Han embroidery museum in Hubei Province was established in the Hanyang District of Wuhan, displaying a large number of Han embroidery works for free and opening an experience and learning area to promote and spread the Han embroidery culture.

2. Overview of the Translation of Han Embroidery Culture

Although Han embroidery culture has developed accordingly in some places, the popularity rate of publicity materials in these places is still relatively low, and most of the publicity materials are not translated into English. In addition to the problem of small quantity, there are also some other problems, such as inconsistent translation standards, insufficient accuracy of the translation, and failure to fully convey the cultural connotation of the original text. Therefore, the translation quality needs to be improved. The author also witnessed the scene when some foreign friends went to buy Han embroidery, there were no English brochures or other English introductions. The relatively poor introduction to English hinders foreign friends' appreciation and experience of Han embroidery works and their in-depth understanding of Han embroidery culture, affecting the external spread of Han embroidery culture.

In addition, few scholars have studied Han embroidery translation. Searching journal network and Wanfang database, only one scholar forwarded her opinions on the translation of cultural images and work names of Han embroidery in two journals, namely Zou Cuiying's "The Enlightenment of Translation Theory of Adaptation on the Translation of Han Embroidery Culture" and "On Translating Titles of Han Embroidery Works". At present, few scholars have studied Han embroidery translation

from other perspectives, thus the translation research needs to be further deepened.

3. Translation Strategy of the Four-word Expression In Han embroidery

3.1. Features of the Four-word Expression

Han embroidery is rooted in the area of Jingchu. It relies on the Chu culture and has unique, rich Jingchu cultural characteristics of thick colour, bold conception, exaggerated techniques and fine embroidery work.[4] Han embroidery has rich and colourful patterns, mainly including four categories: plant patterns, such as peony, pine crane, plum, orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum; animal patterns, mainly including dragon and phoenix, Kylin, mandarin duck, bat, fish, etc.; character patterns, such as luck, money, longevity and happiness; and other patterns, such as geometry, utensils, characters, architecture, etc.[3] Therefore, the name of the work has strong Chinese cultural characteristics. These images are self-evident in the eyes of the Chinese people, but they are different to foreign readers. They understand that Chinese people like dragons and phoenixes, but they may not necessarily know the connotation of pine cranes, kyilins or plum blossom in Chinese culture.

3.2. Translation Strategies

Take "Kylin" as an example. "Kylin" is a mythical animal in ancient China, called "Ky" for male and female as "Lin". Its image is a combination of a dragon head, deer antler, lion eye, tiger back, snake scale, horse hoof and ox tail, with a horn on the head. With a ferocious appearance, but gentle character, "Kylin" is known as a benevolent beast. The ancient Chinese people generally believed that the worship of "Kylin" could bring male offspring to the people. The newly-born boy is also known as "Kylin boy" or "Lin boy". [5]

The above shows that the word "Kylin" is rich in meaning, and it will be longer if it is fully translated. Therefore, transliteration with annotation can be used here. "Kylin" can be translated into "Kylin delivering a child/son" with the annotation "In Chinese ancient legend, Kylin is a divine alien animal that can bring people offspring", to achieve a more concise effect while conveying cultural connotation.

Take "Xi shang mei shao" as an example. Han embroidery master Huang Shenghui has a famous work displayed in the Han embroidery Museum called "Xi shang mei shao", which literally means "Happiness(Xi) Appears on the Eyebrows(mei)". The work depicts a harmonious picture of a plum blossom blooming proudly at the end of the branch in the winter with its magnificent smell attracting a magpie to convey the feeling of joy.[6] The Picture gets its name because "xi"(Happiness) can also represent "xi que"(magpie) and "mei"(Eyebrows) has the same pronunciation as "mei hua"(plum blossom). If it is just translated into "Happiness Appears on the Eyebrows", there will be confusion over the relationship between the name of the picture and the picture itself.

In this case, it is suggested that the translator give priority to the needs and aesthetic expectations of the target language readers, abandon the implied meaning and rename it directly according to the aesthetic habits of the target language readers according to the pattern of the work, and if it allows, add the annotation of "In Chinese culture, a magpie resting on a blooming plum tree signifies forthcoming happiness"[7] under the name to show the implied meaning of the work.

When translating, it is necessary to consider the cultural background and expectations of the target language readers, combined with the creation intention, emotion and its naming way, to select the translation strategy appropriately, like transliteration, transliteration with annotation, literal translation, literal translation with annotation, translation of theme (implied meaning) with annotation, paraphrase, transform, omitting and so on to help target readers to appreciate the meaning while appreciating embroidery.

In addition, in the narration and introduction of Chinese embroidery culture, there are many four-word expressions that are not understood by the general public. [8] The translation of such expressions directly affects the basic understanding of this culture and therefore needs to be dealt with with caution. For example, in the creation practice, Han embroidery artists were deeply influenced by local folk embroidery and vigorously pursued the simple and sincere effect in folk embroidery, forming the aesthetic idea of "Hua wu zheng guo, re nao wei xian", dominating the main body of the picture with this aesthetic idea. How should "Hua wu zheng guo, re nao wei xian" be translated? The direct translation is "Flowers have no real fruit, jollification comes first". [9] But this translation is clearly

inappropriate because it is vague and confusing. To translate it accurately, first, we need to understand what it really means.

"Hua" meaning "flower", actually refers to the content expressed in the embroidery surface, or various patterns, such as characters, animals, flowers, utensils, etc., and also vines, rolling grass, water waves, clouds, etc. "wu zheng guo" meaning "have no real fruit", refers to the arrangement and collocation of these patterns that are not bound by natural forms and natural laws, and can be dealt with arbitrarily. For example, the relationship between roots, branches, flowers and leaves, as the environment and location of the characters, animals and other subjects, can be arranged according to the needs of the picture.

"re nao wei xian " meaning "jollification comes first", is to strive to enrich the picture for the pursuit of the magnificent lively atmosphere. The theme is mostly a symbol of good luck, happiness and harmony, and appears in the form of implication, showing a joyful and lively atmosphere.[10]

Thus it can be seen that "Hua wu zheng guo, re nao wei xian" means the free arrangement and collocation of decorative patterns and the pursuit of a joyful and lively atmosphere. So the author thinks that the translation "Decorative patterns free and the atmosphere lively" is more appropriate.

It can be seen that the translation of Han embroidery culture is not simply a Chinese-English transformation, but the connotation delivered by the translator on the basis of fully digesting and absorbing the original Chinese culture and Han embroidery culture. [11] We must dig out the connotation of culture and understand its essence to truly do a good job in translation. Therefore, the first thing translators should do is to understand and learn the connotation and essence of Chinese culture and Han embroidery culture, which is the premise of the translation.

4. Conclusion

Han embroidery culture is rich and colourful, and its translation must be fully accurate, not only fully conveying the connotation of Chinese culture but also being concise and comprehensive and in line with the cultural background and expectations of the target reader. Only in this way can the target reader appreciate the profound meaning while appreciating Han embroidery. China's story show a true, three-dimensional and comprehensive China, and improve the country's cultural soft power. As one of the Chinese intangible cultural heritage projects, the international dissemination of Han embroidery is one of the important contents of China's "culture going global", which is of positive significance to improving the country's cultural soft power and national image. Therefore, interpreters shoulder great responsibility to deliver the cultural connotation in an acceptable way and spread Chinese culture.

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