

Interculturality in the Translation of China's Publicity Texts During the Beijing Winter Olympics

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Abstract

Challenges were met by the translators in the translation of publicity texts during the Beijing Winter Olympics due to the huge cultural differences between China and Western countries. From the perspective of interculturality, this paper deals with the relationship between interculturality and intersubjectivity, interculturality and intertextuality, and the relationship between domestication and foreignization in interculturality, with the intention to provide inspiration for China's future publicity work to overseas audiences and promote the spread of Chinese culture. To achieve the balance in translation, the translators should consider the relationship between authors, translators and readers, and also historical and cultural contexts. The translator should deal with the relationship between domestication and foreignization in a correct way, and pursue the idea of "harmony but not uniformity" when facing cultural differences or conflicts.

Keywords: Interculturality; Intersubjectivity; Intertextuality

1. Introduction

The 24th Winter Olympic Games was held in Beijing in 2022. It is amazing for China to host the Winter Olympics during the epidemic period, but challenges were met by the translators in the translation of publicity texts to the foreigners due to the huge cultural differences between China and Western countries. Interculturality refers to the equal interaction between different cultures, with the characteristics of "mobility, temporality, spatiality and practicality" (Zhang, 2021, p.141). Some scholars have already done some researches on the theory of interculturality, but there are no researches related to the translation about the Beijing Winter Olympics. In this paper, the translation methods and strategies adopted by the translators about the publicity texts during the Beijing Winter Olympics will be analyzed from the perspective of interculturality by selecting some examples of English translations from Chinese mainstream news media and newspapers, with the purpose of providing inspiration for China's future publicity work to overseas audiences and thus promoting the spread of Chinese culture.

2. Interculturality in the Publicity Translation of the Beijing Winter Olympics

2.1 Interculturality and Intersubjectivity

Interculturality involves the relationship between different subjects in different cultures. Intersubjectivity is originally a concept in the field of philosophy, put forward by Husserl, and then applied to translation studies. “Intersubjectivity is the characteristics of the interaction among the authors, translators and readers in certain circumstances” (Hu, 2006, p.13) Intersubjectivity is characterized by “difference, equality, balance and integrity” (Luo, 2012, p.120). Under the guidance of intersubjectivity, with the help of the object text, the translator harmonizes and integrates the author’s thoughts and the readers’ expectations for the translation, and at the same time integrates his own understanding of the original text, so as to do the translation which is favored by the readers with both the author’s and translator’s characteristics.

The translation for “秉持绿色、共享、开放和廉洁的办奥理念” (Bingchi Lvse, Gongxiang, Kaifang he Lianjie de Banao Linian) is “committed to organizing a green, inclusive, open and clean games”. These words are concise and rich in meaning. After the translator fully understood the concept of the Winter Olympics in China, he translated the original text with words that English readers could understand, which promoted the cultural exchange and dialogue between China and the West. “Green” means hosting the Olympics in a way that protects the environment. “Inclusive” refers to the society from all walks of life who are involved in the Game and people who will be fond of winter sports. “Open” refers promoting the exchange of Chinese and foreign sports and strengthening the integration between Chinese and western civilization. “Clean” refers to eliminating corruption, eliminating doping and we should make the Olympic Winter Games as pure and clean as snow and ice. “Green” has the meaning of “concerned with the protection of the environment”, and “environmental” and “green” have similar connotation in both languages. Due to the inter-subjectivity of Chinese and English culture, The translator chose the word “green”, which is more suitable for “绿色” (Lvse), helping the readers better understand China’s ideas of hosting the Olympics.

The translation for “折柳寄情” (Zheliu Jiqing) is “Bidding Farewell with a Willow Twig”, which is a unique image in China and full of cultural charm. Translation is a medium of communication between two different cultures. Translation can make readers interact with each other, that is, the intersubjectivity between readers, which can promote the understanding and integration between different cultures. In the closing ceremony, the Chinese image of “willow” greatly aroused the interest of English readers. NBC News explained that willow is a homonym for “stay” and willow branches are a symbol of parting. One of the aims of translation for the Winter Olympics is to enhance the English readers’ understanding of Chinese culture. “Bidding Farewell with a Willow Twig” triggers the exchange between the Chinese and English culture and promotes mutual understanding between the different cultural subjects.

Intersubjectivity is committed to mutual understanding, mutual respect and mutual tolerance between translators, authors and readers, so that the translation can integrate the respective thoughts of the subjects, balance the translation among the subjects and promote the communication and interaction among the subjects.

2.2 Interculturality and Intertextuality

Intertextuality, which was introduced by the French scholar Julia Kristeva in 1966, refers to the relationship between texts. In Kristeva’s formulation, any text is an “intertext” (Kristeva, 1980, p.66)—it is not “an individual, isolated object but, rather, a compilation of cultural textuality” (Allen, 2000, p.47). “When we read or listen to texts, we rewrite them according to our new surroundings and our knowledge of other texts” (Alawi, 2010, p.2441). In a broader sense, one text is influenced by prior texts as well as the historical and

cultural contexts. Intertextuality is well represented in the publicity translation during the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games.

“一起向未来” (Yiqi xiang Weilai) (in English: “Together for a Shared Future”) is the official slogan of Beijing 2022. Instead of translating it literally as “Together to the Future”, the word “for” was chosen as the preposition, considering the overall environment in which the translator and the translation were situated. Against the backdrop of COVID-19, “Together for the Future” embodies the Olympic’s goal of world unity, peace and progress. “For” reflects the strong will of human beings in the face of adversity, and “for” indicates that our aim is clear and we are ready, while the word “Shared” indicates that everyone in the global village together forms a community of a shared future. Therefore, it can be seen that the social context plays a vital role in determining the choice of words in translation. In order to avoid misinterpreting the original text, the translator should pay attention to the cultural differences between the original language and the target language in the process of translation, achieving an adaptive transformation in cultural dimension.

In the speech at the welcome banquet of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, President Xi Jinping quoted the verse “爆竹声中一岁除，春风送暖入屠苏” (Baozhu Shengzhong Yisui chu, Chunfeng Songnuan ru Tusu), which was translated as “Out goes the old year with the sound of firecrackers; in comes the new with the warmth of wine and spring breeze”. The translation conveyed the main message of the original text and had a close intertextual relationship with it. The term “屠苏” (Tusu) refers to the wine drunk during the Spring Festival in ancient times, made from several herbs. Due to the different cultural backgrounds, the direct translation might lead to certain comprehension barriers for foreign audiences. In addition to “wine”, there was another translation of “屠苏” (Tusu), namely “Toso”. However, “Toso” refers to a kind of Japanese medicinal wine, which may mislead the readers of the target language. The use of “wine” here is more appropriate to their culture and makes it easier for them to understand the customs reflected in the verse. Although the meaning of this sentence was similar to that of the original, the structure of the sentence was adjusted by using inverted sentences, which conformed to the characteristics of the English expression and conveyed the beauty of the Chinese verse, forming a sound intertextual relationship with the original language.

2.3 The Relationship Between Domestication and Foreignization in Interculturality

As a wisdom for respecting cultural differences and a strategy to avoid cultural conflicts and find or create new significances, interculturality provides a theoretical basis for promoting exchanges and the construction of identity between different cultural subjects in the context of multiculturalism. Fei Xiaotong (2000, p.13) believes that it is necessary to respect the “Pluralistic Integration”, which refers to the implementation and establishment of “harmony but not uniformity”, a cultural relation on a global basis. Under the interaction between cultural identities, despite cultural conflicts, a new world culture with the spirit of “harmony but not uniformity” has been formed. To seek harmony but not uniformity is the main feature of the world’s successful civilization system and also the key to interculturality. In cross-cultural translation, domestication and foreignization are important means to achieve exchanges between two heterogeneous cultures. “With the rise of the deconstruction in translation, many binary oppositions in the study of translation theory have been broken, and a pluralistic symbiosis translation ecology is emerging.” (Zhang, 2005, p. 6) Therefore, instead of opposing each other, domestication and foreignization are tending to be unified in speaking and writing.

The high-tech venues of the Beijing Winter Olympics have been highly praised by visiting Olympians and officials. The athletes from all over the world have gone on and on renewing their personal records, breaking

and setting new Olympic records and world records. According to the report, “北京冬奥会高科技场馆让运动员‘如虎添翼’助其打破多项纪录” (“Beijing Dongaohui Gaokeji Changguan rang Yundongyuan ‘Ruhu Tianyi’ Zhuqi Dapo Duoxiang Jilu”), is translated as “Beijing’s high-tech Olympic venues add ‘wings’ to athletes”. “如虎添翼 (Ruhu Tianyi)” means that it is as if the tiger has grown wings as a metaphor for adding strength. The translation does not directly combine “wings” and “tiger”, but disassembles the metaphor so that the “wings” is combined with the “athletes”, simplifying the expression of the metaphor. The “wings” also has many meanings in English culture, such as “clip somebody’s wings”, which means “to limit a person’s freedom or power”. This symbolic meaning makes it easy to remind the reader of the meaning of “power and strength”. The translation not only uses foreignization to retain the metaphor hidden in the original Chinese text, faithfully expressing the meaning of the original idiom and maintaining the original style of the idiom, but also uses domestication to make the expression of the metaphor clear and closer to the target culture, shortening the cultural differences between the two languages and achieving the effect of an interesting communication.

The official names and nicknames of several newly built venues of the Beijing Winter Olympics have different English expressions. The iconic venue of the main division is the National Speed Skating Oval with the nickname “冰丝带” (Bing Sidai), where speed skating competitions are held. The athletes compete together and quickly cross the ice, smooth as a ribbon, so it is known as the “Ice Ribbon”. The translation directly combines “ice” and “ribbon” without destroying the image of the combination of hard ice and soft ribbon implied in the original text, reflecting the Chinese wisdom of “combining toughness with softness”. In English culture, “ribbon” has the meaning of “silk ribbon and bow”, which is exquisite, and deeply loved. This image labels a romantic touch to the high speed and passion of the competition. Secondly, the “ribbon” here also contains good wishes for the majority of athletes in the Winter Olympics to achieve their best performances. Because “ribbon” in English culture also means “a ribbon in special colors, or tied in a special way, that is given to somebody as a prize or as a military honor”. For example, “blue ribbon” means “the highest honor”, so “ribbon” here also symbolizes the accomplishments achieved by the athletes. The foreignization is used to reflect the balance hidden in the nature of Chinese culture. And the domestication is used to make it close to the target culture, so that a more concrete and beautiful picture appears in front of readers’ eyes, conveying the good wishes of the Chinese people to all athletes. The translation symbolizes the spirit of winter sports and the symbolization of Chinese culture into a general imagery language so that readers can recognize, understand and uphold the beauty of each civilization and the diversity of civilizations in the world.

The translation is not only a kind of cross-language exchange but also a cross-cultural exchange. On top of that, from the perspective of interculturality, the translation should objectively deal with local and foreign cultures to reach effective cultural communication, pursue the concept of “harmony but not uniformity”, and then realize the harmonious balance between the global cultural integration and the pluralism of national cultures.

3. Conclusion

From the above analysis, we can come to the conclusion that interculturality is inseparable from intersubjectivity and intertextuality in the translation of China’s publicity texts to foreigners during the Beijing Winter Olympics. There exist cultural differences and similarities, cultural conflicts, cultural infiltration and cultural integration in translation. To achieve the balance in translation, the translators should consider the

relationship between authors, translators and readers, and also historical and cultural contexts. The interaction among the authors, translators and readers should be built on the basis of mutual respect and tolerance. Moreover, the translator should deal with the relationship between domestication and foreignization in a correct way, and pursue the idea of “harmony but not uniformity” when facing cultural differences or conflicts. The successful translation of publicity texts helps to achieve sound cross-cultural communication and provide certain inspiration for the construction of China’s international discourse system and the development of China’s publicity work.

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