

The Characteristics of the English Translation of Chinese Literary Works in the Context of the New Era

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Abstract: Under the background of the new era, the English translation of Chinese literary works presents diversified characteristics. With the acceleration of globalization and the international dissemination of Chinese culture, more and more Chinese literary works have been translated into English and entered the world. In this process, translators not only need to accurately convey the meaning of the original text, but also need to take into account cultural differences, so that the translation can not only retain the style of the original work, but also be accepted by foreign readers. This paper aims to explore the main characteristics of the English translation of Chinese literary works under the background of the new era and analyze its unique manifestations in terms of language, culture, and aesthetics.

Keywords: New era; Chinese literary works; English translation

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1. Introduction

The increasingly frequent economic exchanges and cultural communication around the world have brought unprecedented development opportunities for the English translation of Chinese literary works. Against this background of time, translation is no longer merely a transformation at the language level but rather a cross-cultural communication and exchange. For a long time, the translation of Chinese literary works has not been coherent or systematic. The translation of many works was carried out by translators based on their own preferences, with strong randomness and contingency. With the development of the times, the English translation of Chinese literary works has gradually moved towards a standardized and professional path. Translators have begun to pay more attention to the in-depth understanding and analysis of the original text, striving to accurately convey the author's intentions and emotions during the translation process, and pay more attention to the understanding of the target language culture in order to properly handle cultural differences in translation and make the translation more idiomatic and natural.

2. The background of the era of the English translation of Chinese literary works

Entering the new era, China's comprehensive strength has further enhanced. Especially with the implementation of the "Belt and Road Initiative", it is even more necessary for Chinese literary works to showcase their unique charm and value on the international stage. This era background provides a broad space for the development of the English translation of Chinese literary works and also puts forward higher requirements for it. With the improvement of China's international status, foreign readers' interest in Chinese literature is growing increasingly intense. They are eager to understand the profound and rich connotations of Chinese culture through English translations. Meanwhile, the popularization of the Internet and the accelerated development of global informatization have enabled the English translations of Chinese literary works to spread more rapidly and widely to countries around the world ^[1].

In the new historical context, China's cultural confidence is inevitably an embodiment of the continuous strengthening of cultural construction. However, a series of problems existing therein still await in-depth thinking and exploration, such as the English translation of Chinese literary works. Regarding the English translation of Chinese literary works, translators first need to conduct rational discussions on Chinese literary works from different perspectives, such as history and development, and understand the unique charm and cultural connotation of Chinese literary works. Translators should not only have a solid language foundation but also possess profound cultural literacy and acute aesthetic insight. Only in this way can they accurately capture the essence of the original text during the translation process and ingeniously integrate Chinese cultural elements into the English expression, making the translation both faithful to the original work and having a distinct contemporary flavor and cultural characteristics. Meanwhile, with the continuous development of translation theories and the continuous innovation of translation technologies, the English translation of Chinese literary works is also facing new challenges and opportunities. Translators need to constantly learn and explore new translation methods and techniques to adapt to the changes of the times and the changes in readers' demands, and promote the continuous development of the English translation of Chinese literary works ^[2].

3. The characteristics of the English translation of Chinese literary works in the context of the new era

3.1. The combination of macro and micro

Under the background of the new era, one of the characteristics of the English translation of Chinese literary works is the combination of the macroscopic and microscopic aspects. Translators not only grasp the cultural connotation and aesthetic features of Chinese literary works as a whole, but also delve into specific language details, striving to accurately convey the meaning of each sentence and each word. At the macroscopic level, most translators have a relatively in-depth understanding of the historical background and cultural context of Chinese literary works and can accurately grasp the theme and emotional color of the works in translation. At the same time, translators also pay close attention to the dissemination effect of the works in the international cultural context to ensure that the translation can overcome cultural barriers and resonate with foreign readers. At the microscopic level, translators conduct meticulous analysis of the language expression of the original text, including the choice of vocabulary, the structure of sentence patterns, and the use of rhetoric, effectively ensuring the consistency of the translation in language style with the original text. This translation strategy that combines the macroscopic and microscopic aspects enables the English translation of Chinese literary works to have both a profound cultural background and a high degree of language accuracy ^[3-4].

For example, when translating Lu Xun's masterpiece "Call to Arms", the translator not only accurately translates each word and sentence but also deeply understands the inner world of the characters and the social background described by Lu Xun, accurately conveying the critical spirit and national emotions in the work to foreign readers. On this basis, the translator also grasps the characteristics of the times and literary style of the work as a whole, making the translation more in line with the reading habits and aesthetic needs of English readers while retaining the spirit of the original work. This translation method that combines the macro and micro perspectives not only enhances the literary value of the translation but also promotes the international dissemination and exchange of Chinese culture.

3.2. Popularity is positively correlated with the research heat

Under the background of the new era, the English translation of Chinese literary works presents another remarkable feature, that is, the popularity of the works and the research heat show a positive correlation. This means that those literary works that enjoy a high reputation in China and even around the world, their English translation versions are often also highly concerned, and the corresponding research interest is relatively high. This phenomenon can be interpreted from multiple perspectives. On the one hand, well-known works often have a wider reader group and profound historical accumulation, and their literary value and cultural connotation have been widely recognized and praised. Therefore, the English translation versions of these works naturally become an important window for foreign readers to understand Chinese culture and appreciate Chinese literature. With the continuous improvement of translation quality and the increasingly diversified dissemination channels, the influence and popularity of these translation works in the international arena have also expanded. On the other hand, the feature of positive correlation between popularity and research interest also reflects the degree of attention paid to the English translation of Chinese literary works in the translation and academic circles. With the continuous improvement of China's cultural soft power and the increasingly frequent international exchanges, more and more scholars and translators have begun to pay attention to the English translation of Chinese literary works and devote a lot of time and energy to research. These studies not only promote the innovation and development of translation theories but also provide more scientific guidance and support for translation practice ^[5-6].

Take Mo Yan's "Red Sorghum: A Novel of China" as an example. This work enjoys an extremely high reputation in the Chinese literary circle due to its unique literary style and profound social connotations. Its English translation version not only accurately conveys the essence of the original text but also successfully attracts the attention and research of a large number of foreign readers. Many scholars and translators have conducted in-depth discussions on the English translation of "Red Sorghum: A Novel of China", analyzing its success from multiple perspectives such as language, culture, and aesthetics, further enhancing the international popularity and influence of this work. Similarly, classic Chinese literary works like "Fortress Besieged" and "Rickshaw Boy", their English translations, have also attracted much attention due to the increase in their popularity and research interest. These English translation versions of the works not only enrich the reading choices of foreign readers but also build an important bridge for the international dissemination and exchange of Chinese culture ^[7].

3.3. The involved scope is wide, and the types are numerous

Under the background of the new era, the scope and types involved in the English translation of Chinese literary works are unprecedentedly wide and numerous. From classical literature to modern literature, from poetry,

prose, to novels and dramas, various types of literary works have all been included in the category of translation. This not only reflects the richness and diversity of Chinese literary works, but also showcases the profundity and extensiveness of Chinese culture^[8].

In the field of classical literature, such as the four great classics like “Dream of the Red Chamber”, “Journey to the West”, “Water Margin” and “Romance of the Three Kingdoms”, as well as classic literary works like Tang poetry and Song ci, their English translation versions keep emerging one after another and are deeply loved by foreign readers. Through the meticulous translation efforts of translators, these works have successfully crossed the barriers of language and culture, enabling foreign readers to appreciate the unique charm of Chinese classical literature. In the realm of modern literature, the English translation of Chinese literary works also shows a vigorous development trend. From the works of modern literary giants such as Lu Xun and Mao Dun to the excellent works of contemporary writers, they have all been translated into English and introduced to the world. Through the efforts of translators, these works not only retain the style and spirit of the original works but also ingeniously incorporate English expressions, enabling foreign readers to better understand and accept them. With the rise of online literature, the English translation of Chinese online literary works has gradually emerged. These works, with their unique creativity and rich imagination, have attracted a large amount of attention from foreign readers. Through ingenious translation, translators convey the Chinese cultural elements and aesthetic characteristics in these works to foreign readers, further promoting the international dissemination and exchange of Chinese culture^[9-10].

3.4. Equal emphasis on classic and modern

Under the background of the new era, the English translation of Chinese literary works not only pays attention to the innovation and diversity of modern literature, but also attaches great importance to the inheritance and development of classical literature. During the translation process, translators not only deeply explore the profound cultural deposits of classical literary works but also skillfully integrate modern aesthetics and expression methods, so that the translations not only retain the classical charm but also have a modern flavor^[11].

In the English translation of classical literary works, translators pay particular attention to the precise grasp of the language style, historical background, and cultural connotation of the original text. For example, in the translation of “Dream of the Red Chamber”, translators not only accurately translate every word and sentence but also deeply analyze the character personalities, emotional entanglements, and historical background in the work, striving to present the essence of this classical masterpiece completely to foreign readers. At the same time, translators also skillfully use modern English expressions to make the translation more fluent and natural, in line with the reading habits of modern readers.

In the English translation of modern literary works, translators pay more attention to conveying the innovative spirit and modern aesthetic characteristics of the original works. Through in-depth analysis and understanding of the language style of the original text, they skillfully use English expressions to accurately convey the unique creativity, novel perspectives, and profound thoughts in modern literary works to foreign readers. For example, in the translation of Mo Yan’s novel “Frog”, the translator not only retains the profound reflection on China’s family planning policy in the original work, but also shows the complex emotions and conflicts within the characters in the work through modern English expressions, enabling foreign readers to better understand and feel the unique charm of this modern literary work. This translation strategy that attaches equal importance to the classical and the modern not only enriches the connotation of the English translation of Chinese literary works, but also injects new vitality into the international dissemination and exchange

of Chinese culture. Through the elaborate translation by translators, classical literary works can cross the boundaries of time and space and resonate with modern readers, while modern literary works, through the ingenious conveyance by translators, showcase the spirit of the times and innovative style of Chinese culture^[12].

3.5. The translation of English is becoming increasingly standardized

The increasing standardization of the English translation of Chinese literary works is manifested in several aspects. Firstly, the formulation and implementation of translation standards have become stricter. To ensure translation quality, many translation agencies and publishing houses have formulated detailed translation standards and norms, requiring translators to strictly abide by them during the translation process. These standards and norms cover multiple aspects such as language style, cultural expression, and professional terms, providing clear guidance and basis for translators. On this basis, the translation field has also strengthened the supervision and evaluation of translation quality. Through expert review, reader feedback, and other methods, translation works are objectively evaluated, and problems and deficiencies existing in the translation are discovered and corrected in a timely manner^[13].

Secondly, the application of translation technology has also promoted the standardization of English translation. With the continuous development of technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data, translation tools such as translation software and online translation platforms have become increasingly mature and improved. These tools not only enhance translation efficiency but also provide more references and examples for translators. By using these tools, translators can understand the meaning and context of the original text more accurately and choose more appropriate words and sentence patterns for expression, thereby improving the accuracy and fluency of the translation^[14].

Lastly, the education and training of translation have also strengthened the standardized construction. Many universities and translation institutions have offered translation major courses, focusing on cultivating students' language abilities and translation skills. At the same time, the guidance and supervision of translation practice have been enhanced. Through methods such as case analysis and translation practice, students are helped to master translation norms and standards. These education and training measures not only improve the professional quality and translation quality of translators but also lay a solid foundation for the sustainable development of the translation industry^[15].

4. Conclusion

Under the background of the new era, the English translation of Chinese literary works has achieved remarkable achievements. The number of translated works keeps increasing, and the translation quality is gradually improving. In this process, translators not only strive to accurately convey the meaning of the original text, but also actively bridge cultural differences, making the translation both faithful to the original work and having a distinct contemporary flavor and cultural characteristics. The English translation of Chinese literary works, through the translation strategies combining macro and micro aspects, the attention to popularity and research heat, the wide range and types of translation involved, the translation concept emphasizing both classics and modernity, as well as the increasingly standardized translation practice, has played an important role in promoting the international dissemination and communication of Chinese culture.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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