

## **A Study on the Translation of Foreign Publicity Materials-the Websites of the People's Governments in Shaanxi Province as a Case Study**

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**Keywords:** Government Websites; Foreign Publicity Material Translation; Communicative Translation Theory; International Image

**Abstract:** As China's contacts with countries around the world has become more and more frequent, strengthening publicity becomes a strategic task. As China's contacts with countries around the world become more and more close, strengthening publicity has become a strategic task. With the implementation of the "Chinese culture going global" strategy and the development of foreign communication, China's external communication has achieved gratifying results, and the translation of external publicity materials has received more and more attention. The translation of foreign materials plays an important role in promoting the international community's understanding and cooperation with China, building a good international image of China, and creating a good external environment for national development. The government website shows the image of China and is the window for everyone to understand China. This study analyzes the translation of government websites from the perspective of communicative translation theory. It is hoped that this study will shed light on the researches on translating foreign publicity materials in China.

### **1. Introduction**

As the endorsement of China's external propaganda, the English version of the government website has become an international network of international exchanges and an important front for online diplomacy [1]. An English-language government website, with accurate language and appropriate expressions, is crucial in promoting international users' understanding of China and improving the international influence of the Chinese government. An English-language government website with many language mistakes will undoubtedly affect China's international image. The main target audience of the English website are foreign merchants, tourists, students and other people who are interested in Chinese social culture. The purpose of English websites is to introduce and publicize the local investment environment and social and human information so that people can understand the local economy, society, culture, urban construction, etc. Therefore, the role of the English translation of the website is very important [2].

This paper, adopting Newmark's communicative translation theory, analyzes the Chinese and English websites in Shaanxi province as a case study, summarizes the translation methods and skills that can be used in the process of translating the English website, and put forward suggestions for improving the quality of website translations, in order to contribute to the construction of English websites and the establishment of China's international image [3].

### **2. The Current Situation and Existing Problems of the English Websites of People's Governments in Shaanxi Province**

The English websites of People's Governments in Shaanxi Province mainly include several major sections: Government, News, Tourism, Investment, Business. These sections can basically cover the key points of foreign cultural and economic exchanges, but there are many problems in these websites [4].

First of all, the website content is not up-to-date. When browsing the English website of Shaanxi Provincial Government, it can be found that in the News section the news are not updated to the latest one. For instance, on April 10, 2019, the latest news in English website is the news

"National-level postdoctoral innovation platform launched in Xi'an" which happened on April 4th, 2019. Similar problems also exist in the English websites of People's Government in other cities of Shaanxi province. For example, in the English website of Xi'an Government, the latest news on April 10, 2019 is the news "China smashes Kyrgyzstan 6-0 at Silk Road Hua Shan Cup" which happened the day before. The content of the English website has not been updated, which results in the news not reflecting the timeliness. As a window of economic and cultural exchanges between China and the West, its function will be reduced when its content is stale.

Secondly, the content is not rich enough. The contents of the English website are relatively poor. There are only a few items in each section. For instance, in the English website of Xi'an Government, in Business Section, there are only for articles to introduce the investment environment in Xi'an and the services provided by the government to support investors, which are far from enough for foreign investors. Similarly, in the English website of Hanzhong Government, there are simply twelve articles introducing scenic spots in Tourism Section. However, in the Chinese website of Hanzhong Government, there are hundreds of articles and news introducing the beautiful scenery, folklore, traditions and scenic spots in Hanzhong city. Poor content can't really achieve the purpose of publicizing the government.

Thirdly, the quality of translation needs to be improved. There are many errors in the translation of the website of the Shaanxi Provincial Government and People's Government in other cities in Shaanxi province, such as word errors, syntactic errors and translation strategy errors, etc. For instance, "The Shaanxi History Museum in Xi'an, regarded as "the pearl of ancient dynasties and house of Chinese treasures", gives a miniature overview of the thousands of years of Chinese history and the splendid ancient cultures of olden times", in this sentence "olden times" is not proper in this context, for "olden times" refers to the past ages, not ancient time. What's more, in the Tourism Section in the English website of Hanzhong government, there are many error in the translation. For example, "The Golden monkey is an endangered species and faces a range of ongoing threats and the persisting effects of past disturbances, including habitat loss, human predation and the biological vulnerability associated with having the entire species occur in eleven small, isolated populations", in this sentence "predation" is not used correctly. "predation" is defined as "an animal kills and eats another animal". Thus, predation cannot be used to describe people's hunting.

Finally, there are not corresponding English websites in the websites of People's Government in many cities in Shaanxi. Totally, there are ten main cities, among which only three cities have English website. To publicize the image of Shaanxi, there need be more English websites for each main cities and districts.

### **3. An Overview of Communicative Dimension**

From a micro perspective, ecological translation is "a translation practice that controls the translators of weak languages on what to translate, when to translate, and how to translate." Its purpose is to achieve a balance between language and cultural exchanges. The translator makes adaptive choices based on multi-dimensional adaptation to the ecological environment of translation(Hu 2013). The translation method can be roughly referred to as "three-dimensional transformation", that is, adaptive selection transformation which is relatively concentrated on linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension. This paper focuses on communicative dimension, which is closely related to Newmark's Communicative Translation Theory. According to Newmark(2001), "Communicative translation attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original"(39). Communicative translation focuses on the target reader, and target readers do not expect any reading difficulties and obstacles in the process of reading the translation. Communicative translation is intended to maximize the transformation of exotic elements into target culture and target language, but the translator must follow the expression of the original text. Communicative translation puts more emphasis on the "strength" and effect of transmitting information than on the content itself. Communicative translation is more fluent, concise, and clear. When translating

complex chapters, it uses more general expressions, conforms to the language expression habits of specific domains, and tends to under-translation.

Communicative translation reorganizes the translation syntax to make the translation more smooth and concise. Communicative translation is more subjective. In the case of translation units, communicative translation uses sentences or paragraphs as translation units. From the perspective of functional linguistics, communicative dimension refers to the interpersonal intention of translation. During the translation process, the translator should follow the communicative function of the original text. In order to realize the communicative function of the source text in its ecosystem, the translator needs to make an adaptive conversion to ensure that the communicative function of the original text is reflected in the target language ecosystem. Therefore, from the perspective of communication, in order to realize the communicative intention of the translation, the translator needs to consider whether the target language reader can have the same response as the source language reader have. Zhang Jian (2013:30) argues that the translation of the publicity texts should focus on the effect of the translation and the response of target readers.

#### **4. The Translation of Foreign Publicity Materials from Communicative Dimension**

Publicity material translation is closely related to the government's image and the construction of "Soft Power". Thus, it is required that the translation of publicity materials should be precise and proper. The readers of the English website are foreign readers who care about China's development (Zhang 2010). It is different from Chinese readers in terms of factors like thinking patterns, information needs and verbal expression habits. The expression that many Chinese people take for granted is likely to cause confuse for foreign readers who don't know much about China. Therefore, it is necessary to enhance the pertinence of the translation.

Translation from the perspective of communicative dimension is more suitable for informing texts and vocative texts, aiming to make the effect of the target language on the target language reader as close as possible to the source language's effect on the source language reader. The purpose of the publicity material translation is to present and introduce the real and comprehensive China, which constitutes its informing function. The transmission of information is the basic purpose of publicity. The ultimate goal is to enable foreigners to have a comprehensive understanding of China, to continuously expand China's influence in the world, and to improve China's diplomatic relations. Then the vocative function is another basic feature in the translation of publicity material. The focus of the publicity material translation is on the delivery of information and the target reader. Therefore, in the translation of publicity material, the translator should follow the target language and focus on the target language readers. From the language and cultural background of the target language readers, when the form and content of the translation are accepted by the readers, the expected communicative effect can be achieved.

#### **5. Translation Strategies for Publicity Material Translation**

In terms of the publicity material translation, the following strategies can be adopted: interpretation, annotation, conversion and omission.

##### **5.1. Interpretation**

The translator considers the reader's readability and usually uses the interpretation method to explain it properly. When reading the literal translation, the English readers can't understand smoothly or misunderstand the information. Therefore, in the process of translating the English-version of the government website, the use of such translation skills is based on the premise of the communicative dimension theory. The reader's feelings make the translator adapt to the translation culture, so that the target reader can accurately understand the information conveyed as close as possible to the original reader's feeling when reading the original text.

Example (1)

Source text: zha shi kai zhan "wu lao" guan ai xing dong.

(from the website of Yan'an Government)

In the source text, “wu lao” is a term with Chinese characteristics. If the translator just translates it as “five old people”, target readers cannot understand what the term refers to. In Chinese context, wu lao refer to five kinds of people, namely retired cadres, veterans, elder experts, retired teachers and retired model workers. So the source text above can be translated as the following version.

Translation: to care for retired cadres, veterans, elder experts, retired teachers and retired model workers.

## 5.2. Annotation

Due to the differences between Chinese and English culture, not all words have equivalents in Chinese-English translation. So it is necessary to use annotation method to make up for this vacancy. Annotation can usually be used to supplement the background material, the meaning of the words, etc., so that the target readers have no obstacles in understanding the translation and can understand the culture of the original language to the maximum extent.

Example (2)

Source text: xue lei feng, shu xin feng, xin xiang dang, gen dang zou.

(from the website of Yan'an Government)

In this sentence, “lei feng” can not simply be translated by transliteration, for foreign readers do not know who lei feng is. So the translator should combine transliteration with annotation to make sure target readers can understand the implied meaning of “learn from Lei Feng”. The source sentence is suggested to translated as the following one.

Translation: to learn from Lei Feng (a well-known Chinese People's Liberation Army soldier who were famous for his spirit of dedication), set positive atmosphere and follow the communist party wholeheartedly.

## 5.3. Omission

Chinese is redundant, and English is concise. Therefore, in the Chinese to English translation, it is necessary to adopt English-speaking language expression habits and adopt the translation skills of omission. Among them, the most distinctive point is that Chinese tends to add category words such as “construction”, “mechanism”, “process”, “level”, “problem”, “phenomenon”, “work” and so on. These words sometimes have no real meaning in themselves, but they can make Chinese reading more fluent, more authentic, and conform to Chinese expression habits. However, in Chinese-English translation, the translation of category words can be omitted, otherwise it will lead to redundancy of English and affect the customary expression of English.

Example (3)

Source text: chi xu zeng jin tai wan tong bao de wen hua ren tong, min zu ren tong he guo jia ren tong.

In this sentence, there are three “ren tong”. When translating this sentence, the translator should omit two “ren tong” to avoid redundancy. Therefore, the sentence is advised to be translated as the following one.

Translation: to continuously enhance Taiwan compatriots' identity of culture, nationality and nation.

## 6. Conclusion

In order to achieve the expected communicative effect, flexible translation methods are adopted in the translation of publicity materials. This paper uses the Chinese and English websites of the people's governments at various levels in Shaanxi Province as the source of the corpus, summarizing and synthesizing several common strategies used in the translation of the website, namely: interpretation, annotation, and omission to provide some suggestions for translators when translating the publicity materials in websites in the future.

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