

## A Study on the Translation of Folk Songs of Dong Minorities

Juan Zhao and Ji Liang

Institute of Foreign Languages, Huaihua University, Huaihua, Hunan 418008, China.

E-mail: 183509903@qq.com, 2559636588@qq.com

**Keywords:** Folk Songs; Translation; Dong Minority

**Abstract:** Folk songs of ethnic minorities have their unique characteristics. Taking folk songs of Dong Minorities as an example, this paper explores the translation strategies and two types of translating strategies, translating the general meaning of lyrics and song dubbing are provided.

### 1. Introduction

As an important part of Dong's cultural tradition, folk songs of Dong Minorities are the source of Dong culture, which not only has a profound influence on Dong minority, but also has a wide range of influences on Han, Yao, Miao and other ethnic groups. The study on English translation of folk songs of Dong Minority is of great cultural significance. It can help to explore the translation strategies of folk songs of Dong Minority and improve the quality of the translation. And it can better promote the Dong traditional culture to go abroad, and spread excellent cultural tradition of Dong minority to the west. It is also beneficial to the excavation of Dong minority's traditional culture. In order to let the people around the world have a deeper understanding of folk songs of Dong Minority and introduce the excellent minority culture to the world, it is of great cultural significance to translate folk songs of Dong Minority into English.

### 2. Research at Home and Abroad

Folk Songs of Dong Minorities have attracted a lot of scholars' attention.

**Domestic Research.** Domestic research on folk songs of Dong Minorities mainly goes through the following stages. First of all, the initial stage appeared shortly after the founding of the People's Republic of China. It focused on the stage development of Dong music. The stage development mainly occurred in the initial development period after the founding of the People's Republic of China (1949-1960). At that time, the main purpose was to display and carry forward a folk art with unique aesthetic value to all parts of the world outside Dong village through a stage, so as to better promote its protection and inheritance.

Secondly, since the 1980s, the research has experienced a rapid development period. Since the mid-1990s, Chinese government has been committed to the protection, inheritance and development of folk songs of Dong Minorities. The protection and inheritance have been paid more and more attention in the domestic Dong areas. As Dong Chorus, Dong opera and Pipa Song of Dong have successfully applied for world-class and national intangible cultural heritage, folk songs of Dong Minorities have attracted more and more attention from scholars at home and abroad. At this time, domestic scholars also gradually pay attention to the translation and introduction of Dong culture. Taking Guizhou Province as an example, a lot of projects reflect that Chinese government attaches great importance to the translation and inheritance of the excellent traditional culture of ethnic minorities, such as Guizhou Ethnic Affairs Projects "Studies on the Translation of Ethnic Minorities in Guizhou Province" and "Introduction of Intangible Cultural Heritage into English Teaching", Master's Degree Project in Humanities and Social Sciences "Research on English Translation and Introduction of Minority Culture from the Perspective of Evaluation System". Scholars generally believe that translation, as an important means of cultural communication, should attract more people's attention. For example, Wan Yongkun holds this view in his paper "A Study on the English Translation of Ethnic Minorities' Holidays" and other articles. In recent years,

although China attaches great importance to the translation and inheritance of Dong culture, few achievements have been made in the translation and introduction of folk songs of Dong Minority.

Finally, to the beginning of this century, the dissemination of Dong culture and Dong Chorus gradually become a boom. There are more and more actors engaged in Dong song and dance performances, which can be divided into three categories: first, professional actors in scenic spots all over the country; Second, song and dance performance groups scattered in the local scenic spots; The third group is those who implement the "going out" strategy and perform wherever there is a stage. Although some scholars have studied the actors' groups of Dong Minority, few scholars have studied the English translation of folk songs of Dong Minority. However, the spread and translation folk songs with modern information technology and digital technology have just started.

**Researches Abroad.** At present, foreign studies on Dong folk songs are rare and lack professional research and translation. However, with the economic development of the times, foreign scholars are eager to learn about the excellent culture of Chinese ethnic minorities, especially the artistic and cultural works, Dong folk songs.

### 3. Translating Strategies of Folk Songs of Ethnic Minorities

According to the correspondence between the music score and the translated text, the translation of folk songs of ethnic minorities can be divided into two types: translating the general meaning of lyrics and song dubbing.

**Translating the General Meaning of Lyrics.** Translating the general meaning of lyrics refers to that the translator only translates the main meaning expressed by the original lyrics and does not pay attention to the harmony between the translation and the score. The main purpose of the translation is to let the target language readers understand the content and thoughts contained in the source language lyrics, and to assist the target language readers to appreciate the source language songs. There are two main reasons. First, the song and lyrics are inseparable. Only the combination of the two can produce the ideal music. Once the two are separated, the beauty of the original music cannot be conveyed. The purpose of translating the original lyrics is to assist the foreign readers to appreciate the original music. Secondly, it takes a long time to translate and match a song so that the translation and the original music complement each other. Translating the general meaning of lyrics is relatively simple, which facilitates the timely introduction of songs from different languages and nationalities.

Lyric translation is a common type of folk song translation of ethnic minorities. In recent years. Let's take "The Song of Inquiring about Love" from Dong Chorus as an example,

The Song of Inquiring about Love

Ferns come out in March soon after the slopes are burned in February.

They are all tender and fresh.

I have waited for your love since last year, but you postpone it to this year.

And this year I still wait for your love, but you tell me to inquire about it next year.

The new ferns will come out once the old ones wither.

But our youth will never come back once we are old.

I am willing to wait for your love no matter how long it may take.

I'm only afraid I am idling away my youth.[1]183

The above lyrics reflect Dong people's love and life habits in a very beautiful language form. Dong youth express love very directly. They use the flying swallows as a metaphor for loyal love. "Fern" and "yue tang" are the words with Dong cultural characteristics. Fern is a simple plant in western culture, but it is not only a delicious food in Dong culture, but also has metaphorical meaning of "spring" and "love", which reflects the mutual influence of Han and Dong nationalities in culture. In *Grass and Insects*, Zhaonan, the Book of Songs, there is a poem named "Take the Fern in the South Hill of the Poyang River", which links the picking of fern with love. The translator translated it as "fern", which can only achieve roughly the same effect in the literal sense, conveying a common plant image. The translation of "Yue Tang" into "hall" was also a last resort. In Dong culture, "Yue Tang" is not only a place for holding various family activities, but also a

place for free exchange of feelings and love between young men and women. The word "hall" reminds readers of a place where all kinds of banquets and parties are held. It is hard to compare it with the place where young men and women are concerned with love and romance, not to mention the different architectural images expressed by these two words. In addition, the translation does not correspond with the original text in pronunciation and rhythm, nor does the beat and rhythm of music form a certain distinctive correspondence and matching relationship with the music score, which is not suitable for singing. When translating the lyrics, the translator has only translated and introduced the main meaning expressed in the original lyrics.

**Song Dubbing.** There is no need to translate musical compositions, only the lyrics need to be translated. In addition to expressing certain meaning and emotion, the original lyrics also form a harmonious relationship with the song, which is suitable for singing. In translating the general meaning of lyrics, translators pay more attention to convey the meaning and situation of the original text, and pay less attention to the harmonious collocation between the rhythm of the original songs and the rhythm of the language. In contrast, the pattern of song dubbing focuses on the collocation between the translation and the original songs, and requires the tone and rhythm of the translation to coordinate with the musical structure of the original songs, and pays attention to the singing quality of the translation. In this way, the pattern of song dubbing becomes a creative crossword puzzle, which puts forward higher requirements on the translation, which is not only faithful, but also suitable for singing.<sup>[2]99</sup> A translation that is faithful to the meaning and content of the original lyrics and suitable for singing is regarded as a high-quality translation.

In short, in translating folk songs of ethnic minorities, translators should know a lot about the characteristics of minorities' folk songs and make some compromise between the loyalty and readability of the translation.

#### 4. Conclusion

Folk songs of ethnic minorities are a unique and important art form in Dong culture. Its existence value is highly recognized by people, which not only reflects the spiritual pursuit of Dong people, but also has important significance for the inheritance and development of Dong culture. As ethnic minority folk songs have their own characteristics, translators should also retain the textual features of the original text, and pay attention to the oral, vocal, literary and artistic nature of the translation. In order to enhance the mutual trust and understanding between different nationalities in the world and increase the efforts of ethnic minority folk song translation, improving the quality of translation has great cultural significance still has a long way to go.

#### Acknowledgment

In this paper, the research was sponsored by Huaihua Social Science Review Project "A Study on the English Translation Strategies of Folk Songs of Dong Nationality "(HSP2019YB42) and Innovative Training Program for College Students in Hunan Province "A Research on the translation of *Dong Chorus* based on General Secretary Xi's 'Cultural Industry' Concept".

#### References

- [1] Yang Xiao. *Dong Chorus* [M]. Beijing: Culture and Art Publishing House, 2012.
- [2] Hu Fenghua. "Song Dubbing" and Song Translation [J]. Journal of Anhui University, 2007(5).
- [3] Wu Dingguo, Deng Minwen. Culture in the Sound of Cicadas -- A Collection of *Dong Chorus* [M]. Guiyang: Guizhou Minorities Publishing House, 2005.
- [4] Liu Xiaoling. Selection of Song Translation -- On the Impact of the Popularity of Cover Songs on Song Translation [M]. Journal of Hunan University, 2011(5).