Metaphorical Translation of Buzzwords under the Guidance of Skopos Theory

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Abstract. In the field of cognitive linguistics, metaphor is a core concept whose influence is far beyond linguistics area, and becomes one of the central topics in areas such as philosophy, linguistics, logistics, psychology, cognitive science, artificial intelligence and pedagogy. Metaphorical translation is a process of cognitive representation of cross-cultural communication. It is not only viewed as a figure of speech, but also regarded as a way of cognitive understanding of human beings. The main problem of metaphorical translation is how should we translate the subtle meaning of metaphor, and what translation method is most suitable for target readers to understand the original text? So this paper aims at discussing the different translation effects resulting from different translation methods under the guidance of Skopos Theory and the translation strategy of foreignization and domestication. And buzzwords are used as samples to analyze the different effects of relevant metaphorical translation.

Introduction

What is metaphorical translation? Metaphorical translation is rhetorical figure, which is one of the figures of speech. Metaphor is to use a word or a phrase to point out a common object or concept to substitute another object or concept so as to indicate the similarity between them. Metaphorical words normally do not appear in the sentence, and the form of metaphor is that “A is B” and not “A like B”. There is no word “seem” in the sentence, but the meaning of “seems like” is included in the sentence. That is the reason why people call it metaphor. Metaphor has different expressive effect in different type of works, and here we discuss metaphor from two aspects: literature texts and non-literature texts. In literature texts, the goal of metaphor is to deliver a thought, a concept or an abstract or intentional idea. In non-literature texts, metaphor is regarded as a practical research in translation field. And the famous translation theorist Newmark also proposed idea that metaphor, in fact, is based on the scientific observation, and is a knowledge gained through the similarity of two phenomenon which includes objective itself and process. In this paper, the reason of using buzzwords as examples is because that the amount of netizens in China is growing as the Internet is becoming more and more popular in recent years, and the netizens are allowed to talk anything they want in the Internet. Meanwhile, a lot of events that can reflect social hot spots are concentrated on the new topics under the attention and comment of netizens, which creates a lot of buzzwords from these hot topics. So the development of buzzwords reflects the development of society, which reflects a certain amount of cultural phenomenon. So this paper studies the metaphorical translation of buzzwords by different translation methods.

Skopos Theory

Hans Vermeer was an important founder of Germany Translation Purpose School. He established Skopos theory, which focuses on translation as an activity with an aim or purpose, and on the intended audience of the translation. Vermeer suggested that a real practical meaning of Skopos theory is to point out that the fidelity to source text is not the only criterion of judging the translation texts. Translation means to produce a target text in a target setting for a target purpose.
and target addressees in target circumstances. And three main rules of Skopos theory are Skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule. Among these three rules, Skopos is a Greek word for “aim” or “purpose”, and it is the top-ranking rule for any translation, which means that a translation action is determined by the purpose or aim of translation, and taking what kind of translation method is also determined by the purpose or aim of translation.

**Metaphoric translation and buzzwords**

This paper, based on the Skopos theory, aims at expressing the meaning of metaphor of buzzwords through different translation strategy and method, and the purpose is to deliver the subtle meaning of the buzzwords to readers. Buzzwords are words or expressions that have become fashionable in a particular field and are being used a lot by the media. Using buzzwords as examples is because that its appearance and development represent a cultural phenomenon. To explain this cultural phenomenon is the purpose of metaphoric translation.

**Metaphorical translation methods of buzzwords under the guidance of Skopos theory**

The number of Chinese characters is large and every character has more than one meaning. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, metaphor is regarded as a way of thinking of humans, and it is shown in different ways when the culture and environment are different, which leads to a different understanding for the same word. With the increase of China’s influence in the world, etymons of Chinese characters are being used in international language, and this appearance presents an uprising trend. So in this paper, we take buzzwords as examples to discuss different translation methods used on metaphorical translation under the guidance of Skopos theory.

**Paraphrase**

A paraphrase of something written or spoken is the same thing expressed in a different way. As a translation method, paraphrase means to explain the text without using a target word to substitute.

Example 1.

ST: 剁手党 -- Duo Shou Dang
TT 1: Hands-chopping people
TT 2: hands-chopping people are great number of online spenders who self-mockingly say that they would like to chop their hands off after buying too much online

“Hands-chopping people” -- From the perspective of Chinese character, “to chop hands” is a way of act; “people” here means a group of people who gets together on the same purpose and same interests. However, the meaning of “hands-chopping people” in this text is the great number of online spenders who self-mockingly say that they would like to chop their hands off after buying too much online. Here, the word “hands-chopping people” itself is a figurative body, and it’s noumenon represents “the buyers who are in deep remorse for spending too much money”. Literally, this word is translated by translation method of literal translation as “hands-chopping people”, and it could be understood as a group of people who wants to chop their hands off. But this version cannot express the subtle meaning of the word. However, paraphrase, by contrast, is a better translation method for us to take. To paraphrase is to explain in a different way. So we use translation method of paraphrase to translate this word: “hands-chopping people are great number of online spenders who self-mockingly say that they would like to chop their hands off after buying too much online”. This way of expression fully expresses the Skopos rule and makes sure that the target readers understand and know the subtle meaning of the buzzword as source language readers do. After an inquiry, we know that people in foreign country do not have the conception of the word “hands-chopping people”, but they do have a proper noun to represent people who are crazy about shopping called shopaholic which is more intuitionistic and clear, but shopaholic cannot express mental activity of the buyers. So the best way to translate Chinese buzzword “hands-chopping people” is to use translation method of paraphrase.
Example 2.
ST: 吃土-- Chi Tu
TT 1: Eating dirt
TT 2: Eating dirt in China is an expression which means for “double eleven day” when people bought so much that they have no money left for food, so they have to eat dirt, completely different meaning to the word in America.

“Eating dirt”--means to be left in the dust (with a mouthful of dirt) by someone far more able, as in competition, which stresses on the action. And that is the definition given by Slang dictionary. But this word here actually means that a lot of people are spending their money irrationally on online shopping, which leads them to the result of no extra money to eat. So the translation here is clearly taking the method of word-for-word translation. But in this way, the metaphorical meaning of the word is not obvious, which fails to show economical situation of the buyers after irrationally spending all the money on shopping. So we could take translation method of paraphrase which belongs to domestication strategy and translate it into: “Eating dirt” in China is an expression which means for “double eleven day” when people bought so much that they have no money left for food, so they have to eat dirt, completely different meaning to the word in America. And this way of translation is more suitable for expressing the metaphorical meaning of this word and also is more in conformity with the Skopos rule.

Imitation

Imitation is to copy the original model of the word and try to express its key information by adding or slashing information.

Example 3
ST: 呆萌-- Dai Meng
TT 1: Adorkable
TT 2: Adorable dork

“Adorkable”-- is a compound word which describes the innocent, pure and likely personality of a person. Here we use adorkable to represent a group of people who are cute and adorable. In English, “dork” indicates a group of people who are dull and doltish; “adorable” indicates a group of people who are lovely and favorable. It is obvious that the metaphorical object of the word “adorkable” is a person or an animal that is likesome and endearing. And translation method we have taken is imitation which belongs to the domestication strategy. Through the way of concentration or expansion, we put the word dork and adorable together to make a new word “adorkable”. In Slang dictionary, definition of “adorkable” is “adorable dorks”, which clearly shows the content and the meaning of its metaphorical object, and also conforms to the Skopos rule, which its main purpose is to deliver the message to the target readers.

Liberal translation or free translation

The main distinguishing problem of liberal translation is how to deal with its rhetorical technique, and the purpose is to reappear the meaning of the original text.

Example 4.
ST: 三无科学家-- San Wu Ke Xue Jia
TT 1: scientists of three nos
TT 2: “Scientists of three nos” means scientists who don’t have doctorate, nor the background of studying abroad, nor the academician title.

“Scientists of three nos” --is a new word coming from a winner of Noble Prize in medicine calling Tu Youyou. Because she didn’t have doctorate, nor the background of studying abroad, nor the academician title, the journalists called her as “scientist of three nos”. In Chinese, “three nos” means a person or a product has no qualification to do a thing. Here, translation method of “scientists of three nos” is literal translation, which fails to express the metaphorical content of the word. The metaphorical object of this word is no doctorate, no background of studying abroad and no title of academician. So here, we could take translation method of liberal translation, and
translate it into: “Scientists of three nos” means scientists who don’t have doctorate, nor the background of studying abroad, nor the academician title. This liberal translation method which belongs to the domestication strategy is according with Skopos rule and clearly delivering the metaphorical meaning of the word.

Example 5.

ST: 老漂族--Lao Piao Zu

TT 1: elderly immigrants
TT 2: “Elderly immigrants” represents a group of people who moves to a whole new strange city in their late ages to help their children take care of their grandchildren.

“Elderly immigrants”-- the word “elderly immigrants” itself is a figurative body which represents the elder who leaves their homeland and comes to a new environment so as to take care of their grandchildren. In Chinese, “immigrants” are people who don’t have a stable life.

Here, we take word-for-word translation method to translate “elderly immigrants”, which means “immigrants who are in their late ages”. But this is not clear enough to express the subtle meaning of the word. So we take liberal translation method to translate: “Elderly immigrants” represents a group of people who moves to a whole new strange city in their late ages to help their children take care of their grandchildren.

Literal translation

In the form of language processing, literal translation allows appropriate change or transformation, in order to make the translation accord with the target vocabulary.

Example 6

ST: 双十一狂欢节--Shuang Shi Yi Kuang Huan Jie

TT 1: Double eleven-online shopping event
TT 2: Singles Day is celebrated on Nov. 11 because the date—11/11—is reminiscent of "bare branches," the Chinese expression for bachelors and spinsters. In 2009, Alibaba sparked the flame that turned it into what it is today—a massive marketing event selling everything from electronics and clothing to cosmetics and food at big discounts. It sells through Tmall, AliExpress and Taobao Marketplace platforms, and through merchants' brick-and-mortar stores.

“Double eleven-online shopping event”-- this word’s presence is the epitome of the development of Internet industry, and now it represents a rising shopping carnival for all Chinese people. The word’s original meaning is double eleven day, in which all the single men and women are celebrating their situation of being alone, and people use number “1” to indicates single man and woman. Every year, Alibaba serves a big discount in its shopping mall called TaoBao and T-Mall on Nov. 11. This year, Alibaba’s double eleven-online shopping event campaigns on the slogan “buying from the globe” and “selling for the globe”. And the metaphorical meaning of “double eleven-online shopping event” is large-scale shopping carnival, which indicates shopaholic wave figuring with Chinese characteristics.

So literal translation method of “Double Eleven” gives a great explanation of Chinese characteristics, but, at the same time, it confuses foreigners. So a better way to translate this word is to use translation method of literal translation and annotation: Singles Day is celebrated on Nov. 11 because the date—11/11—is reminiscent of "bare branches," the Chinese expression for bachelors and spinsters. In 2009, Alibaba sparked the flame that turned it into what it is today—a massive marketing event selling everything from electronics and clothing to cosmetics and food at big discounts. It sells through Tmall, AliExpress and Taobao Marketplace platforms, and through merchants' brick-and-mortar stores.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that the translation methods of buzzwords should be guided by Skopos Theory so as to make target readers to understand its meaning clearly. Under the guidance of Skopos Theory, this paper analyzes different effects of metaphorical translation of buzzwords
by using different translation methods such as liberal translation, paraphrase, imitation and word-for-word translation. By the comparison of different translation versions, it illustrates what is the best way to translate metaphorical meaning of a buzzword so as to deliver the subtle meaning of the word.

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