Interpreting Chinese Culture-loaded Words from the Perspective of Eco-tranlatology Theory

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Abstract. Culture-loaded words are probably unknown in the target culture. The interpretation of these culture-loaded words is definitely a big challenge in the international conference. This paper intends to explore the interpreting of culture-loaded words from the perspective of Eco-translatology theory, specifically by employing its Three-dimension transformation theory. Through collecting and classifying the culture-loaded expressions, this paper aims to come up with coping strategies of the interpreting of these words based on its specific linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions.

Introduction
Diplomacy, as an essential political activity, plays a bigger role to enable states to secure the objectives of their foreign policies without resorting to forces, propaganda, or law. China now is a growing international status, sharing a bigger say on international stages, exerting a climbing influence around the globe and getting more attention from all corners of the world. Meanwhile, China is also facing a much complex global environment. Interpreting, therefore, shoulders great responsibilities in the process of China’s “going global”, such as the NPC and CPPCC sessions, which provide good opportunities for foreign media to learn about China, to know well about China’s policies and so on. Interpreting serves as a bridge to overcome the language obstacles. However, interpreters always face big challenges in the C-E conference interpreting as a result of the existence of culture-loaded words. Since there will be no equivalent expressions of those words in the target language, the interpreting of culture-loaded words on diplomatic conferences is of great difficulty and needs thorough research. Therefore, this paper tries to look at the interpreting of culture-loaded words in conference interpreting context from the perspective of Eco-translatology theory, in a hope of getting effective coping strategies in light of multi-dimension transformation model.

Culture-loaded Words
Each nation or country has its own unique history and living environment, thus it has its own unique expressions: culture-loaded words. These words are closely related to the cultural background, which make it hard or even impossible to find an equivalent word or expression in the target culture. Mona Baker (2000) clarified in her book the definition of culture-loaded words, “the SL words may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture. The concept may be abstract or concrete, and it may relate to a religious belief, a social custom, or a type of food. Such concepts are often referred to as culture-specific. Chinese linguist Bao Huinan also noted that every language is the product of its nation’s cultural development with long history and rich diversity. Each nation boasts with itself its unique historical evolution, social system, ecological environment, religious belief, ethnic customs etc. All these combined makes culture-loaded words come into being. (Bao, 2001:341)
Eco-Translatology: Translation as Adaptation and Selection

In 2001, Professor Hu Gengshen from Qinghua University has firstly proposed in an international translation symposium the theory of Eco-translatology. The key point of this theory is: the work of translation should be translator-centered; the process of translation involves the translator’s active adaptation to the original text based translational eco-environment, and the translator’s active selection of the target translational eco-environment. “the translational eco-environment” here refers to the original text, source language and target language, an interactive community for language, communication, culture, society and writer, reader, mandatory.

Translational eco-environment consist various factors that restrict the translator from making best adaptation to the target language and optimal choices. It also serves as the foundation and basis for the translator to make multi-dimension adaption and adaptive selection. According to Professor Hu, “Different translation versions come from different adaptations and selections made by translators. The different adaptation and selection made in the process of translation give rise to the existence of different version.

The theory of translation as adaptation and selection depicts the translator’s process as two phases: the translator’s adaptation and the translator’s selection, as shown in figure 1:

Figure 1. Adaptation and Selection Phases in Translation (Hu, 2009: 6).

Interpreting Culture-loaded Words from the Perspective of Multi-dimension Adaptive Selection Theory

This study adopts the “three dimension” transformation strategy from translation as adaptation and selection theory. Three dimensions include linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension. According to the multi-dimension transformational theory, the source text and the target text are transplanted in the three dimensional eco-environment. Professor Hu stressed that source text and target text are nonliving objects, yet translator is a subjective person with adaptive and selective capabilities. (Hu, 2004:94) This multi-dimension transformation relation can be shown as in figure 2:

Figure 2. Three-dimension Transformation.

According to the eco-translatology theory, translation is considered as a process of making adaption and selection in the linguistic, cultural and communicative dimension.

Linguistic Dimension

Adaptive transformation in linguistic dimension means that interpreter conducts the adaptive transformation between the source language and target language. To fully transfer the cultural connotation, thoughts and emotions in the source text, interpreter should try to keep the original language forms. As Newmark (2001) mentioned, different languages, with their own uniqueness, must respect the differences in other language so that they could achieve effective communication. Interpreter needs to make necessary adjustment to transfer the information in source language with unique structure in the target language.
Cultural Dimension

Adaptive transformation in cultural dimension requires the interpreter focus on delivering and illustrating the cultural differences in the process of interpretation. The huge differences in the east-west cultures sometimes hinder the communication. Therefore, interpreter should not only consider how to transfer the textual information, but also the cultural differences, especially when facing with culture-loaded words. Thus the whole communication process is successfully conducted among the speakers. Interpreter should bear in mind that the interpretation of culture-loaded words is the delivery of cultural symbols. Interpreter serves as a bridge to narrow the gap between the Chinese and western cultures. Adaptive transformation in cultural dimension, if managed properly, could best avoid misunderstanding and ensure the communication process go on smoothly.

Communicative Dimension

Adaptive transformation in communicative dimension is the adaptive selection of communicative purposes of the speakers involved in the process. That is to say, interpreter is not only required to transfer the linguistic meaning and cultural connotation, but also the communicative intention of the participants in the process. (Hu, 2013:217) When the interpreter is interpreting a specific category of culture-loaded words, he will just need to figure out the intentions in the communicative process. With the criterion of adaptive transformation in communicative dimension, interpreter should become aware of the importance of eco-translatological environment where he is translating, not only with regard to the content to be interpreted, but also the nature of the whole process of communication in which they are involved.

Conclusion

The multi-dimension transformation of linguistic information, cultural connotation and communicative purpose actually carry on simultaneously. Interpreting is to help the target audience understand what the source-language speaker tries to express and build a bridge for them to exchange information within limited time range. Therefore, interpreter needs to swiftly transform the culture-loaded words by adapting to the source text and target text at the same time. In this case, in order to accomplish the task, interpreter should take into consideration how to make the target audience understand what the speaker said in the first place, and then try to overcome the cultural difference existed in the two language forms, so that he could make his interpretation more acceptable and coherent in the target language. To fully complete the communication purpose, interpreter usually will properly adjust the target text according to the source text, so as to achieve coherence in the target language. In all, the coherence can be achieved with the effort done by interpreter in terms of interpreting culture-loaded words by making transformation among the linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions.

From what has been stated, we can come to conclusion that eco-translatological theory is of great practical significance in terms of giving guidance on interpreting Chinese culture-loaded words in conference interpreting. The multi-dimensional adaptive transformation can be fully applied to give some enlightenment when interpreters are coping with such culture-loaded words.

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References


