A Study of Translation and Dissemination of Tujia Folk Songs in Western Hubei Province

Hong Xu

ABSTRACT

Folk songs Translation has its comprehensive consideration in cultural poetics, readers and translation methods. The translation of the Tujia folk songs in western Hubei province basically follows the traditional theoretical model, without too much consideration of the actual situation of the translated language culture and the needs of its readers. In order to have a good understanding of translation and dissemination of Tujia Folk Songs, some strategies are provided following, such as, clarifying the goals of constructing cultures, using a multi-method translation for different readers, making full use of the target language and culture, and preserving the original and easily interpreted style.¹

INTRODUCTION

With the increasing frequency of international exchanges in recent years, the translation market in China has undergone great changes. Since 2011, the orientation of foreign translation work has gradually changed in China, especially the translation of Chinese into foreign languages. This shows that “China has changed from an input-based translation market to an export-oriented market.”¹China is a multi-ethnic country with 56 nationalities. Different nationalities have nurtured their own unique national culture in the process of development, and made different contribution to Chinese culture and world culture. The more ethnic, the more worldwide. Making such a splendid ethnic culture go to the world is not only related to national identity, manifestation and construction of national discourse, but also related to the problem of inheritance and development of various national cultures in

¹Hong Xu, Hubei University for Nationalities, Enshi, Hubei, China, 445000.
China. Culture is an important issue for the development of the world and world culture. Thus, many experts and scholars in China have been devoting themselves to the translation of ethnic minorities in China, including the related translation work and research work. The academic seminar held on foreign translation of Chinese ethnic minority libraries in Chengdu in 2013 and 2014 can be described as an academic conference for foreign translation of ethnic minorities. Experts and scholars from all over the country have conducted in-depth exchanges and discussions on foreign cultural translation of ethnic minorities. As an intuitive and effective way of cross-cultural communication, Tujia folk songs in western Hubei province not only has great value and significance to the current translation theory research, but also has great practical significance and enlightening function to promote the Chinese minority literature and culture to the world. If it is said that translation “should become one of the focuses of ethnological research”[2], then it is particularly necessary to examine the translation and dissemination of English songs of Tujia folk songs in western Hubei province in the globalization world.

RECENT STUDY OF ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF FOLK SONGS OF TUJIA NATIONALITY

Folk songs, sung by civil society in certain regions, are not only a form of folk literature and art, but also a form of regional culture and a central part of Chinese music. To understand Chinese music, folk songs must be studied. With the exchange of Chinese and Western cultures, the representative of culture—the folk songs began to be sung by other countries in different languages, and a large number of foreign songs were translated into Chinese. In sharp contrast to this, the number of outward translations of Chinese folk songs is far less than the number of domestic foreign folk songs. Not telling the number of minority folk songs translation, the foreign translation of minority folk songs in China’s current translation basically followed the traditional theoretical model, without too much consideration of the actual situation of the translated language culture. Thus, English translation of folk songs of Tujia nationality in western Hubei province fails to meet the aesthetic taste and reading expectations of the target language readers, and most of the translated songs are poorly readable and difficult to disseminate and accept widely. Therefore, the translation of minority folk songs in ascendance today requires a large number of highly qualified translators.

In recent years, as scholars pay more attention to folk song texts both at home and abroad, more and more translators have devoted themselves to the research and practice of English translation of folk songs. Some scholars in China have noticed the importance of the translation of minority folk songs. Sui Bin has carried out disciplinary positioning of folk song translation, analyzed its historical status and proposed some strategies. [3] Pan Guangqin and Cui Jing studied translation of folk songs from the perspective of functional translation theory, translation aesthetics,
and teleology. [4] The above studies have made useful explorations and attempts to translate and disseminate folk songs in minority nationalities from different aspects. However, there are few studies on the English translation of folk songs at home and abroad, especially fewer systematic and extensive studies on specific nationalities or works on a specific folk song. All folk songs in different regions or different nationalities have their own characteristics, and the social nature of their folk songs is also the same. Gao Yuexia and Cao Yu think that Hubei Tujia folk songs have their own language features and singing characteristics. [5] Comparing the Jingchu folk song of south central Hubei province with the folk songs of Tujia people in southwestern Hubei province, Xie Yaping and Wang Yifang believe that the same folk songs embody the coincidence and blending of Chu culture and Ba culture. [6] Different folk songs represent the struggle for survival in different regions and different ethnic groups, express the desire to conquer nature or pray for the blessing of the God.

As a cross-cultural communication activity, translation is always conducted in a certain context and involves factors such as content, translators, approaches, readers or receiving groups. In the current process of foreign translation of folk songs, most Chinese translators have not conducted an in-depth analysis of the target language, actual needs, cognitive abilities and the actual acceptance of the potential readers of the foreign translation of ethnic minority cultures. There is a lack of understanding of the needs and acceptance of readers. In the process of translation, more and more alienation strategies are opposed to domestication strategies, and most of the translation focus only on one strategy. Therefore, it is difficult for translated songs to adapt to the aesthetic expectations and reading expectations of the readers of the target language and culture. In addition, another problem is that that the traditional approach ignores acceptance and cannot truly achieve the goal of cultural construction in ethnic minority cultures translation. Therefore, it is necessary to promote the translation of ethnic minorities in China and spread China’s culture in a pragmatic and effective manner.

SOME STRATEGIES FOR THE TRANSLATION AND DISSEMINATION OF TUJIA FOLK SONGS

Clarify the Goal of Cultural Construction

The translation of ethnic minorities work in China is not a cross-cultural communication in a general sense. Its purpose is not only to inform the public, but also to inherit the Chinese culture in the culture of the target language so as to realize the goal of cultural construction. The success or failure of translation work and their influence should be based on the premise that translation work can be established and accepted in the culture of target language. The cross-cultural characteristics of translation make the production, dissemination and acceptance of translated subject influenced by the mainstream ideology, poetic concepts and
cultural needs of the target language culture. One of the reasons why the translation of Chinese classics and literary works has so far had little effect is the lack of proper understanding of the historical and cultural context and the internal needs of the target language, only regarding translation as a simple language conversion activity, and a simple pursuit of originality. Foreign countries, especially in the West, have not yet formed an acceptance environment that has a strong demand for foreign culture. This requires us to consider how to nurture the audience of Chinese culture and make the audience accept them in foreign countries, especially in western countries. [7] For the readers of the translated work, the significance of the Tujia folk songs in western Hubei province lies in their re-understanding, interpretation and acceptance, which are fundamentally depends on the historical and cultural context of the target language, reader’s cultural habits and cognitive patterns. Richards once considered translation as one of the most complex activities in the universe. This also reflects on the other hand that foreign translation of ethnic songs is not an overnight process, but is a process in which our country’s culture continues to export and the target language readers gradually accept and accumulate the language and cultural factors of ethnic minorities in China. The dissemination and acceptance of literary culture is a gradual process. Therefore, the foreign translation of the Tujia folk songs in western Hubei province will also be a long-term process of cultural input and cultural adjustment. The nature of cultural translation and cultural construction requires the consideration of the cultural language and poetics of the translated language.

**Use A Multi-Method Translation for Different Readers**

Translation readers are not potential readers in an abstract sense, but readers with different educational backgrounds, knowledge structures, aesthetic tastes, and cognitive conventions in certain cultural forms. Even the readers with the same culture, will have the above differences. The folk songs of Tujia nationality in China are different from the western literary classics in terms of their development patterns, themes, and ways of speaking. Therefore, in translating ethnic songs, it is necessary to consider the reader groups and translation methods. Based on in-depth reflection on the purpose of translation and readership, in the process of translating, it is important to seek the greatest degree of similarity between the British and American country music and the folk songs of the Tujia people in western Hubei province, allowing readers who are completely ignorant about Chinese to understand the true features of the Tujia folk songs. Thus, the British and American readers can learn the Tujia folk songs, know about culture of the Tujia folk songs, love the Chinese folk songs, helping British and American readers understand the ideological content and style characteristics of folk songs. Lefevere believes that the refraction text contains translation, literary criticism, collection of works, comment, drama adaptation, film and other methods, and “reflection is a process of image construction” [8]. This approach enriches the cognition of readers from multiple levels, improving their
cultural decoding capabilities. Therefore, the multi-method translation can be fully considered in order to provide the necessary background knowledge in the culture of the target language and to fill the vacuum of introduction of Chinese ethnic minority songs.

**Make Full Use of the Target Language and Culture**

Readers understanding of ethnic minorities translation work is affected by their previous background. On the one hand, the song texts of ethnic minorities in China mainly aimed at readers or audience groups that have been influenced by western mainstream ideology and poetic concepts for a long time. On the other hand, most of them have very limited knowledge of Chinese folk songs, especially the folk songs of the Tujia people in western Hubei province. Therefore, the main task of translation is to supplement the background knowledge of the target language readers and gradually increase their cultural accumulation. So, it is necessary to consider the advantages of the target language, and to express the cultural elements of the Tujia folk songs in a way that is well-received and easily accepted by foreign readers. To seed the culture of ethnic minority literature in foreign cultures, the target language text should be as close as possible to the cultural norms of the target language, and comply with the language game rules of that language. As a result, translators can use the expressions widely used in classic writers and cultural classics in the culture of immigrants, instead of adopting a rigid expression that appears to be loyal but have the habit of descriptive expression. Still, it is a good way to cooperate the work of both Chinese and foreign translators, that is, in the translation model, Chinese translators first translated a few folk songs into foreign languages, and then foreign translators modified them. Of course, such translations are not completely naturalized translations. Just as domestication and foreignization are relatively relative, naturalized translations themselves contain heterogeneous ideological content.

**Preserve the Original and Easily Interpreted Style**

The translation is a process by which the translator constantly makes choices. It includes the question of which translation strategies and methods to use to present the text of the original language: Is it the naturalization of the original text? In fact, this involves the adequacy and acceptability of the translated work. On the basis of the “translation” and “acceptability” of translated texts, we must also take into account the original feature, which is also the essence of the translation and introduction of ethnic minority culture in China. Of course, the preservation of the original style is not the same as that of the original text, but considering the reality of “language difference” and “cultural difference”, consider the actual reception context of the translated text and the reader’s cognitive ability. Not completely relocating readers, they will lose the effect of “emotionality” and “education”. Helping foreign readers understand the folk songs of the Tujia ethnic group in
western Hubei province is to create an acceptance atmosphere and cultivate a “community of interpretation” in the culture of the target language, instead of giving up Chinese elements. Of course, it is difficult for foreign readers to gradually increase their cultural accumulation. Therefore, more attention needs to be paid to communicate the background and language features of Chinese culture. It can be said that “easily interpreted” and “maintaining the original style” are the ultimate pursuits of the translator’s translation process. Only in the harmony and unity of the two can we effectively import the language and cultural factors of our national minority literature into the culture of target language, and further promote the translation of ethnic minority literature.

CONCLUSIONS

The translation practice of folk songs and its original ideas have important and practical significance for the dissemination of Chinese minority culture. The Hans J. Vermeer, a German-speaking scholar, believes that “any translation is intended for the intended audience because translation aims at achieving the desired translation in the context of the target language and because translation is a behavior to give readers a text in specific contexts.” The translation practice of Tujia folk songs in western Hubei province fully demonstrates the cultural poetics and translation politics of translation. Translation is not a simple language conversion behavior, but a constructing culture process that spans between language and cultural barriers. It involves the intrinsic needs of the subject culture, the purpose of translation, the readership group, the way of translation, and the way of expression, which affect the dissemination and acceptance of translated work. This determines that the foreign translation of the Chinese folk song is a collision and adaptation with the other culture. It is a process of interpreting and constructing minority culture in an exotic culture. Therefore, the readability and acceptability of the translated language work are crucial. So, it is possible to use a variety of approaches to gradually enrich the cognitive framework of the readers of translated language so as to promote the dissemination and acceptance of translated text. In the specific translation process, Chinese and foreign translators can make use of the advantages of the translated language as much as possible to express China’s own stories and spread the Chinese culture in the way that western readers like to express themselves. At the same time, the translation process also serves as a process of dispelling doubts and gradually increasing the cultural capital accumulation in Chinese culture and ethnic minority culture, which will create the conditions for the successful realization of cultural construction.

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REFERENCES