Normative Study on Website Translation of Cross-Border E-Commerce in China under the Belt and Road Initiative

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Abstract: By analyzing website translation of cross-border e-commerce in China under the Belt and Road Initiative, this paper points out some internal factors that affect the whole translation process and also attaches great importance to the external factors. Those problems require translators not only to focus on the source text itself, but also to choose suitable translation strategies considering cultural factors. Solutions are given in accordance with functional translation theory and cultural studies, which aims at making full use of translator's subjectivity during the translating process. By doing so can website translation of cross-border e-commerce in China make further progress, which will contribute to the development in this field and national economy.

Keywords: Website translation of cross-border e-commerce; Belt and Road Initiative; problems and solutions; functional translation theory; cultural turn in translation

1. Current situation of Cross-border E-commerce in China

China proposed the initiative of cooperatively building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, also known as the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013 to improve connectivity and cooperation on a transcontinental scale. This initiative is a long-term policy and investment program with the purpose of infrastructure development and economic integration of countries along the two historic silk roads. As a consequence, the entire world changes for the better day by day, especially in economic cooperation among different countries which accelerates the process of globalization to some degree. Due to the positive impacts of this initiative, development of market-oriented economy in China has been led to a brand new way in foreign trade. The Cambridge dictionary defines 'cross-border' as something happening between different countries or involving people or businesses from different countries. When it comes to cross-border e-commerce, the term generally means international online trade. It entails the sale or purchase of products via online shops across national borders. Buyers and sellers are not located in the same country and are often not ruled by the same jurisdiction, use different currencies and speak different languages as well.

Cross-border e-commerce is world-wide, intangible, anonymous, instantaneous and paperless, all of which are key features to develop international market[1]. Our Cross-border e-commerce has already penetrated into the international market and also established trade relations with several other countries as well as districts. In recent years, our nation has already established numerous websites such as AliExpress, Tmall, Ymatou, HIWORLD, The Store and so on. All the websites of cross-border e-commerce covers at least 26 different kinds of languages including English, French, German, Japanese, Thai, etc. As English is the language used worldwide, most of these websites are designed in English in order to make things convenient to customers. With the rapid development of China's market-oriented economy, various models appear in cross-border e-commerce. Generally speaking, there are mainly three models: Business to Business (B2B), Business to Customer (B2C) and Customer to Customer (C2C). Benefiting from continuous development of the international online market, China's cross-border e-commerce industry has also maintained a trend of rapid growth. In 2020, the imports and exports of China's cross-border e-commerce totaled 1.69 trillion yuan, an increase of 31.1 percent, including exports of 1.12 trillion yuan, a rapid growth rate of 40.1 percent, as well as imports of 570 billion yuan, an increase of 16.5 percent.

2. Problems in Website Translation of China/s Cross-border E-commerce

In accordance with current situation of cross-border e-commerce in China, it is obvious that website translation of this field will certainly play a more essential role in the future. In cross-border e-commerce, through descriptions and pictures can customers get to know the products they want to buy. Therefore, not only accuracy of language but also efficiency of translation should be attached great importance to, for these two factors will inevitably affect customers' buying decision to a large degree. However, by analyzing the quality of website translation, a lot of problems have been found, all of which can be roughly divided into two, internal and external factors.

2.1. Internal Factors

In this essay, internal factors refer to problems that exist in both original and target texts, such as choice of key words, accuracy of language and structure of sentences. To start with, key words speak out the most prominent characteristic of a product, by which customers can figure out its feature, function and quality so as to instantly have a better understanding of it in an all-round way . However, some companies in China tend to choose more exaggerated words as key words, considering overstatement as a great attraction to customers. But the drawback is that exaggeration may lead to confusion, which it will make it difficult for customers to get the correct information. Another problem is that vendors think an full description does contribute to their products, so they tend to cluster a bunch of words together regardless of their necesity (While shopping online, almost every customer prefers to spend less time on gathering information rather than keep browsing the website for hours on end. As a result, precise, brief and accurate keywords describing the most distinctive features of a product, with fewest possible words, can perform their job quite well. Perhaps someone will wonder why the choice of key words should be considered as an internal factor lying in translation. The reason is that translating is a specific language activity based on a source text, which is to say quality of the original text will certainly affect efficiency of the target text. In this way, right choice of words in original text is the first step to present an effective translation.

What's more, cross-border e-commerce is an emerging field in international commerce and business English is a branch of English language system, which is used for specfic purposes in foreign trade[2]. One of the most important features of business English is accuracy of language, especially in translating introduction of products, because it is one of the two ways for customers to get a direct and clear impression. Unlike general English, language used in a certain field has its own fixed collocation, such as blue ship, free on board as well as cash on delivery in Business English[3]. A slight move in one part may affect the situation as a whole. If one word is misused, the entire meaning will change. However, inaccurate expression always can be seen in website translation of cross-border e-commerce, for example, *authority to import and export*. The correct expression of this phrase should be *right to import and export*. Such errors may be caused by machine translation or unprofessional translators. Although translation machines are updated from time to time, sometimes they still just translate meaning instead of the right collocation, if there is no relevant data in its term-base. Different words and phrases in one language may have a similar meaning, and this will lead some translators who lack professional knowledge in business English to make the same mistake as translation machines.

The last internal factor this essay will discuss is the structure of sentences. During the daily reading or communication, it is quite easy to find different sentence arrangements between Chinese and English. In China, people tend to use short and simple sentences usually with the most essential information in the last part to express their ideas while people in English-spoken countries prefer longer and more complex expression with its core at the beginning. However, in website translation of cross-border e-commerce, English translations usually follow the original Chinese sentence pattern and arrangement, which may lead to confusion while reading. The difference in sentences structure should also be emphasized while translating, in accordance with which translators are required to rearrange the sentence structure, so that convenience in reading is prepared for customers. If companies choose machine translation, post-editing is necessary, for machines are often unlikely to realize different sentence arrangements without pre-set programming.

2.2. External Factors

External factors stand for factors that influence translators as well as readers during process of translating, reading and understanding such as cultural factors. Some companies spare no efforts to polish words, phrases as well as sentences in translation without taking cultural factors into account. For

example, if garment companies in China never notice the different expression of size between Chinese and western culture, literally translating the size used in China into English language. As a result, there is no doubt that customers in English speaking countries will not buy these products, because the product dose not fit their height and weight. Values vary from one nation to another, and this can explain why people usually put superiority on their own culture. Insufficient comprehension or misunderstanding of culture and custom, such as religious belief and dietary habit in target nation, may lead to dissatisfaction among target costumers.

Translation is not only transformation of words between two languages, but also communication among different nations. Cultural factors require researchers to pay attention to other fields beyond language studies and translators to carry out translation in accordance with cultural diversity. Firmly rooting in the spirits of a nation, these factors affect its people unconsciously and cannot be removed with ease. Carrying out translation activities without taking cultural differences into consideration often dose not make sense, and it may accomplish the very opposite. Quality as well as efficiency of translation will not be improved, if translators only fix their eyes on the text itself instead of taking external factors into consideration.

3. Solutions to the Problems in Translation

By analyzing website translation of China's cross-border e-commerce, problems lie in both translating process and target text can be found, which requires some suggestion to be proposed, so as to improve efficiency of translation and promote sales of the products. Aimed at solving problems of different kinds, advice will be put forward from internal and external factors respectively.

3.1. In Terms of Internal Factors

There is no doubt that text on the websites of cross-border e-commerce has specific function, attracting or persuading customers to buy their products. On account of such purposes, functionalist translation theory is an effective way to guide the whole translation process. Functionalist translation theory with Skopos theory as the core, emphasizes functions of translation. This theory advocates translators to analyze the source text by clarifying author's intention and purpose before start translating.

Reiss generalized features of four different types of text, including informative, expressive, operative and audio-medial text. Translating an informative texts should convey indicative or conceptual content of the source text, while translated version of expressive texts is required to reproduce aesthetic and artistic form of the original one. Operative discourses, both in source language as well as target language, are supposed to evoke expectant response from their readers, and audio-medial ones need to seek for some auxiliary methods, such as dubbing words in video or music. Contents on the websites of cross-border e-commerce mainly has two functions, introducing product and persuading costumers into buy ing, so the text belongs to informative and operative discourse. It is a combination of economy and culture, which is expected to motivate or stimulate costumers during their [4]. An effective and qualified version in target language ought to maintain the same function. The translation is supposed to present a clear, understandable and attractive description of products, which will help costumers from other nations make their decision. All the website translation of cross-border e-commerce should be carried out following the requirements mentioned above. Only by doing so, can the translated version fulfill its function as an informative and operative discourse.

As to translation of keywords, the first step that sellers should take is to choose appropriate words. Appropriate keywords refer to words that precisely highlight main features of product itself. Keywords not only need to be translated, but also need to be searched and verified online[5]. Many vendors believe that forming a more standardized description with terms and translating Chinese keywords into English is what they only need to do. However, according to theory of language economics, language is a valuable and effective product, so that both businessmen and translators need to dig out economic benefits implied in the language. Keywords of a product should never remain unchanged because of the variable market trends. Before choosing a keyword, vendors are better to do some market researches and be informed with current market conditions, so that they will know which words used in description may bring maximal profits.

According to functions of an informative and operative text, accurate translation of terms in business English is essential, while mistranslation may cause barriers in reading and understanding. Without an accuracy translation, original meaning cannot be conveyed in target language and costumers are likely

to be confused by incorrect English expression. In order to deal with this kind of problem, database of translation machine is supposed to be enlarged, while translators need to do much more practice and memorize as many collocations as they can[6]. During the translating process, whenever come across some words or phrases that translators are not familiar with, especially some collocations or abbreviations, such as original equipment manufacturing (OEM), China compulsory certification (CCC) and federal communications commission (FCC), looking up in a dictionary or searching for parallel texts is a must. After practicing from time to time, translators' experience in translation will accumulate and translation skills can also be improved. Qualified translators are required to make sure every word as well as sentence they translate does make sense, in other words, maintaining accuracy of language in target text, which cannot be simply achieved by literal translation. An effective translation not only translate literal meaning but also follow the correct collocation. Although checking translation word by word may be a tough task, this is what a professional translator always bear in mind.

The third part comes to different sentence arrangements between Chinese and English. The western mode of thinking is essentially rational, and westerners often arrange a sentence in an objective tone, expressing how objects act on people's perception. On the contrary, traditional Chinese philosophy derived from exploring the existence, essence and value of human beings. As a result, Chinese people often arrange the sentence with a person as its subject. Another distinctive feature between Chinese and English expression is that Chinese people prefer short and simple sentences with the core information at the end while people from western world tend to use long and complex expression with the most important part at the beginning. Differences in expression and sentence arrangement also affect efficiency and quality of translation. While translating, translators should be aware of such distinctions and rearrange sentence order in target language, which will offer great help to remove obstacles in reading. Therefore, Costumers are able to catch the most important information effortlessly and have a better understanding about the product. Then, sales volume also goes up with function of an effective translation being achieved.

3.2. In Terms of External Factors

The culture turn in translation study was initially put forward by Bassnett and Lefevere in 1990, pointing out that analysis of translation cannot neglect the body that surrounds it[7]. Lefevere advocated that translation is not carried out in vacuum. The certain era in which translators live and understanding of own culture will inevitably affect their translation style as well as methods[8]. They considered that translation study should no longer follow the linguistic mode, for the previous one only focused on language itself. In their brand new point of view, except focusing on language issues, translation studies also need carry out discussions in a broader historical and cultural perspective, like sociology as well as psychology[9]. Meanwhile, the traditional view considering translators as "servants" of original texts has also changed with the cultural turn in translation study. The role of translators in translating process has been redefined, and their subjectivity in translation has caught much attention in researches[10]. Language is the carrier and manifestation of one culture on which it bases, reflecting and revealing all the features a nation has. Hence, translation is not only an activity that conveys linguistic notations from one langue to another, but also an exchange of information among different countries and districts.

Although cross-border e-commerce is an emerging field in business activities, it is still a specific kind of communication between trading nations, which has an inseparable connection with cultural factors. When translating the name or introduction of a product, it is likely for translators to come across culture-loaded words. Sometimes an image cannot be found in another culture like mythological creatures, or in some cases, the same thing might have totally different meanings in two nations, which is considered as the inequality of cultural factors. While translating culture-loaded words, translators ought to take full advantage of their subjectivity, choosing appropriate words in accordance with cultural characteristics of the target nation. Translation strategies and methods like conversion, amplification, ellipsis, alienation or domestication, if used properly, will contribute a lot.

What's more, in website translation of cross-border e-commerce, translators should keep various kinds of taboos in mind, so as to overcome the obstacles caused by cultural differences in translating process and follow the etiquette and customs in other countries, which can help enhance mutual understanding and promote further cooperation[11]. For example, the number 13 has no particular significance in China , but it is considered ominous in western world because of religious factors: Jesus was betrayed by his 13th disciple, Judas. Religion plays an essential role in daily life of westerners, so this story in *Bible* will certainly affect their choice. To avoid problems lead by such differences, both vendors as well as translators should acquire knowledge of cultural background and be highly alert while introducing the product and translating the original text.

4. Conclusion

With rapid development of cross-border e-commerce, business activities break the previous limitation of time and space. Business English is generally used as a common language in foreign trade. Analysis on website translation of cross-border e-commerce indicates that many problems still exist. If translating strategies or methods remain unchanged, efficiency of translation has no chance to be enhanced and vendors won't get their expected profits. Due to higher standards and more strict requirements of translation in business activities, nowadays, translators working in this field need to be proficient in both English and Chinese, recite features of different texts, memorize basic vocabulary as well as fixed collocation in business English. With the aid of machine translation and computer aided translation, some language problems can be solved automatically. Proper application of translation skills and methods such as conversion, amplification, ellipsis, alienation and domestication is also an effective way to provide a readable and understandable translation for costumers in target language. Moreover, translators are better to study professional knowledge before translating and be aware of different cultural factors, so as to ensure language accuracy and avoid problems caused by differences in customs.

Lasting for thousand years, the spirit of ancient silk roads, a precious legacy of human civilization, worships peace, cooperation, openness, inclusiveness and mutual benefit. In order to carry forward the tradition and go further, the Belt and Road connects the continents of Asia, European and Africa, encompassing countries and districts with huge potential for economic development. Trade cooperation between China and countries along the Belt and Road continues and becomes a new vibrant driving force for foreign trade development. In the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, a large number of Chinese companies have gone abroad and explored market overseas. This has infused great vitality into China's economy, which also speeds up developing process of cross-border e-commerce. In order to carry out effective online business activities, website translation of cross-border e-commerce is of great importance, because this is one of the most convenient ways for customers to buy their ideal products. Proper translation will help customers have a further understanding of those products and make their decision in an all-round way, which will also bring benefits to vendors and achieve win-win situation on both sides. As the ancient silk roads have witnessed countless interchanges as well as communications between different cultures and civilizations, at present, such activities still carry on along the process of history.

Acknowledgement

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