

## A Study on Translation Strategies of Chinese Culture-loaded Words in Publicity Translation

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**[Abstract]** With the rapid development of globalization, cross-cultural communication has become increasingly important in international affairs. In international publicity translation, due to the cultural differences between China and English-speaking countries, translating Chinese culture-loaded words into English is a major challenge. Based on the concept of Chinese culture-loaded words, this article analyzes the C-E translation dilemma of culture-loaded words from the perspective of publicity and discusses the translation strategies of Chinese culture-loaded words in the translation of publicity, aiming at providing effective theoretical and practical guidance for translators and international communicators in the process of conveying the cultural meaning of culture-loaded words.

**[Keywords]** Chinese culture-loaded words, publicity translation, translation strategies

### Introduction

Since the emergence of the tide of globalization, Eastern and Western cultures have been moving towards integration in conflict and collision. In recent years, with the proposal of the Chinese leader “a community with a shared future for mankind,” China has also begun to deepen reform and open up. On the one hand, it brings in excellent foreign culture, and on the other hand, it has actively promoted the traditional Chinese culture to go global. With China’s in-depth economic and cultural exchanges with foreign countries, the importance of publicity translation as a bridge and medium for cultural exchanges between countries is self-evident. In the process of practice, it is inevitable that a large number of culture-loaded words will appear in publicity translation, and whether the translation of culture-loaded words is appropriate or not will directly affect the quality of publicity translation. In the process of publicity translation, Chinese culture-loaded words can reflect China’s unique cultural characteristics with strong national characteristics and distinct cultural personality. Chinese culture-loaded words are the words accumulated, inherited, and innovated by the Chinese nation in its long historical development. Therefore, it is necessary to translate Chinese culture-loaded words into English in the process of publicity translation, which can accurately introduce the unique language and culture of the Chinese nation to the world in different language forms, for the purpose of realizing the interlingual and intercultural communication and cultural transmission and promoting the integration and innovation of culture.

### The Concept of Chinese Culture-loaded Words

Robert Lado believes that culture-loaded words refer to “words with the same original meaning but different connotations in the source language and the target language” (1972). Some scholars also call culture-loaded words *lexical gaps* and believe that the reason is that some of the cultural information contained in the source language words cannot be found in the target language,

according to Yu (2016). The culture-loaded words can be described as the cultural background of a nation. The words, phrases and idioms that mark the unique things in a certain culture directly reflect some words accumulated by a nation in the long historical process, which are different from the unique activities of other nations. There are cultural differences between China and other countries, which are reflected in the vocabulary of culture-loaded words. When some words in foreign languages are translated into Chinese, they cannot find the exact corresponding or equivalent words, which forms culture-loaded words.

British scholar Baker (2000) defined it as *culture-loaded words refer to words with specific cultural connotations and conceptual meanings*. There are some things related to national beliefs and social customs in an original language and culture, which can be used to express an abstract or specific idea. Chinese scholar Liao (2000) explained culture-loaded words as *some words or idioms with special meanings in a certain language carry certain cultural signs, and these words reflect certain historicity and uniqueness*. Nida (2004) classifies culture from ecological, social, linguistic and material categories according to the characteristics of culture. Correspondingly, the classification of culture-loaded words also belongs to this category. The uniqueness of culture-loaded words lies in reflecting the national cultural characteristics and cultural connotation of the source language, while it is difficult to find equivalent words in another language and culture. China has a long history and profound cultural heritage. Many words are unique in the context of traditional Chinese culture, such as Confucian *benevolence* and Taoist *Tao* (Chang & Dong, 2022). The cultural information and connotation contained in these Chinese culture-loaded words are difficult to express clearly in other languages. Therefore, in the publicity translation, only by combining the current context and exploring the meaning of these Chinese culture-loaded words can their cultural connotations be better translated.

### **The C-E Translation Dilemma of Culture-loaded Words from the Perspective of Publicity**

#### ***The Translation of Culture-loaded Words is Unclear***

Zhang Jian once said, “Publicity translation has a long history, but as an academic research field, publicity translation is still young and lacks the corresponding systematic theoretical support and strategic macro theoretical guidance of the discipline” (Zhang, 2013, p.10). Therefore, there is no uniform standard for the translation of culture-loaded words. Some scholars have proposed that “the cultural information carried by the source language does not have its equivalent or corresponding vocabularies in the target language, resulting in a lexical gap, so it is impossible to translate its meaning with accurate and appropriate words, and then the transliteration will be used” (Wang, 2006, p.15). Of course, transliteration and literal translation are two forms of culture-loaded words that appear more frequently in translation, but there are still some limitations in the literal translation or transliteration of some culture-loaded words. For example, if the *hongbao* given by the elders to the younger generation during the Chinese Spring Festival is translated into *red envelope*, it cannot reflect the meaning of *hongbao* representing the elders wishing the younger generation peace and welcome the new year.

#### ***Different Cultures are Difficult to Integrate***

Culture-loaded words are usually branded with the time, language and culture of their own nation, and have the cultural regional characteristics of *we only own*, which also leads to the

diversity and complexity of the translation of culture-loaded words. To explore the translation of culture-loaded words from the perspective of publicity, we need to pay more attention to the inheritance and creativity of culture. The purpose of translation is to retain the traditional culture to the greatest extent, so that the target language and readers can more intuitively and clearly understand China's humanities, history, customs, etc. In different languages, the same word may convey different emotions. In the process of translation, copying the original translation will lead to misunderstanding. For example, in some Western fairy tales, dragons are often labeled as *evil forces*. In ancient China, however, the dragon is the symbol of the highest power. Therefore, there are a large number of words related to the dragon in Chinese that express the meaning of blessing, such as expecting one's child to become a dragon, meaning holding high hopes for one's child. Most of the previous versions prefer to translate Chinese *long* directly into *dragon*, but with the enhancement of cultural publicity awareness, cultural differences and local cultural transmission are gradually being paid attention to. There are also many translation versions of *long* that are *Chinese dragon* or *loong*. This kind of translation effectively emphasizes the transmission of national culture and helps readers feel the differences between Chinese and foreign cultures.

### ***Multi-translation of one Word Lacks Standardization***

Due to the uniqueness of culture-loaded words and the diversity of translation strategies and methods, a large number of multi-translations of one word have emerged. Looking at this phenomenon from the perspective of publicity, readers may misunderstand Chinese culture, or even mistake the same thing for multiple things. For example, there are many English translations corresponding to *jiaozi*, such as *Chinese meat ravioli* or *dumpling* and more. Some recent publicity books have translated them into *jiaozi* by transliteration. From the perspective of cultural connotation, *dumpling* is a food with special cultural connotation in China. There is a Chinese saying *see off guests with dumplings; welcome guests with noodles* that means that when you see off the guests, you prepare the dumplings to show your respect and expect them to return safely as soon as possible. Therefore, the translation of *dumpling* is only replaced by the translation of similar foods from abroad, which is difficult to convey the cultural connotation of *jiaozi* in Chinese culture. Some scholars have pointed out that the diversity of translation of words loaded with the same culture is actually not conducive to the international communication of Chinese culture. The more translated versions are, the more confusing they are, and the more likely they are to cause misunderstanding by foreign readers. Of course, the issue of the unification of the translation is not a one-step solution. We cannot rush to achieve success. We can go step by step. We should first solve the translation of the most representative words in Chinese culture, and then solve the internal meaning of multiple statements (Zheng, 2016).

### ***Translation Strategies of Chinese Culture-loaded Words in Publicity Translation***

Firstly, the translation strategy of culture-loaded words from the perspective of publicity should be carried out from the perspective of cultural equality. Secondly, cultural transmission should be carried out by combining language infiltration and cultural infiltration. And thirdly, we should pay attention to innovation of publicity translation.

***Transliteration, Transliteration+Literal Translation, and Transliteration +Explanation***

The transliteration method is mainly aimed at some culture-loaded words that contain *introductions*, including place names, cultural relics, special foods, traditional clothing and buildings, and such. The advantages of transliteration are as follows: the first is to retain the phonological characteristics; the second is to maximize the *identity recognition* function. In particular, some culture-loaded words in international publicity tourism texts can not only help readers identify the relevant information they need, but also help readers feel the rhythm of Chinese pronunciation, which can arouse their interest in Chinese and Chinese culture through transliteration, such as *cuju* (which is a kick-ball activity in ancient China), *weiqi* (go chess), *mahjong*, and more.

For culture-loaded words that lack defining attributes, although they can also be translated through transliteration, they are somewhat meaningless and difficult to understand. Readers who are very unfamiliar with Chinese culture may also experience reading difficulties and this affects the readability of the translated text. Transliteration+literal translation is simply a way of partially transliterating proper nouns and partially literal translation of common nouns in culture-loaded words. This translation method not only preserves some words with Chinese characteristics contained in culture-loaded words, but also helps readers quickly find the meaning of words through literal translation of common nouns. This translation method is applicable to some words translation based on traditional material culture. Examples are *Guangong* (General Guan, a famous general in the Three Kingdoms period in ancient China), and *Huangmei* opera (one of the five major operas in China).

For some culture-loaded words that play an *introductory* role, and words that contain certain historical information, national characteristics, and cultural deposits, it is difficult to reflect their characteristics through simple transliteration. The translation of such culture-loaded words is more suitable for transliteration+explanation. Transliteration highlights the culture itself, while explanatory text enables readers to better understand the meaning of words and attract readers' attention. For example, the so-called *every family in Luoyang learns hu music*" has become a fashion. Among them, *luoyang* belongs to the translation of place name in Chinese culture-loaded words, which is easy to handle. The place is translated as *Luoyang (the second largest city in ancient China's Tang Dynasty)* because the main purpose of the article is to introduce the prosperity of the art of the Tang Dynasty. Luoyang mentioned in the article is not only a prefecture-level city in China today. Luoyang was one of the most prosperous cities at that time in the Sui and Tang Dynasties. Therefore, from the perspective of publicity, the translation of this sentence adopts the method of transliteration+explanation, which can help readers who have some knowledge of Luoyang to understand the history of Luoyang at a deeper level, and also help foreign readers to know the history of Luoyang as a prosperous city in the Tang Dynasty, which deepens their understanding of the sentence *every family in Luoyang learns hu music*.

***Literal Translation and Free Translation, Literal Translation+Annotation***

With the increasing comprehensive strength of China, China's political, economic, and cultural influence on the world is also growing. People of all countries also have some understanding of some traditional Chinese culture, traditional customs, ideas, and current policies. Therefore, for the translation of culture-loaded words with *popularity*, literal translation is often enough to achieve publicity, as for example, the Spring Festival, the Silk Road, and the Belt and Road.

However, for the uncommon culture-loaded words, literal translation cannot vividly convey the connotation of culture-loaded words, and even for some culture-loaded words, literal translation will make readers feel confused. Making good use of literal translation and free translation can deepen the channel of cultural exchange when literal translation can briefly explain relevant cultural words as appropriate to help readers better understand the original information. For example, *When Chinese people drink tea, they look at the water, look at the tea, look at the tea set, and watch the time of boiling tea.* The translation of this sentence basically adopts the literal translation method. In the translation of the Chinese word *kanhuo* (look at the fire), the translator translates it as *watch the time of boiling tea*. Such simultaneous free translation not only makes the Chinese words *kanhuo* better understood, but also publicizes the importance of boiling tea in Chinese tea culture.

Some scholars once believed that there should be some *exoticism* in the translation content, so as to display the national authentic culture. Therefore, literal translation+annotation is more suitable for the translation of some idioms, phrases, and proverbs. Literal translation can retain the charm of Chinese words to the greatest extent, and the annotation part can help readers quickly grasp the meaning of words. There are many ways of annotation, which can be explained by appositive, footnote, emphasizing with parenthesis, etc.

### ***Free Translation***

The free translation of culture-loaded words is to break the literal meaning of the original text and reproduce the intrinsic meaning of the original text by understanding the deep meaning of the original text. Generally, free translation is often used for culture-loaded words that cannot be expressed in literal translation, or for re-creative culture-loaded words, such as some novel names or some ancient records, such as ancient Chinese novels *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Water Margin*, the traditional folk art *shadow play*, etc. The translation method of free translation can make the translation more authentic, easy to understand, and it empathize with the target language readers, as for example in *the stage of Beijing Opera in China presents the beauty of strong colors, which is a kind of gorgeous beauty with intricate colors*, as explained by Ye and Zhu (2016). In this sentence, the Chinese word *cuo* in the phrase *cuo cai lou jin* means *painting and decorating* and *lou* means *carving*. The phrase *cuo cai lou jin* used to describe poetry are very rhetorical flourishes, which implies the colorful beauty of the Beijing Opera stage. If the literal translation is used, readers will not be able to understand the meaning of the article. The phrase *cuo cai lou jin* is translated into *vivid, gorgeous, or enchanting* and other implied meanings. In English, these adjectives can be used to describe the different colors, which can be close to the habits of the target language, so as to make the readers perceive the implied meaning of the article.

### **Conclusion**

The cultural differences of different nationalities determine that the translation of culture-loaded words is difficult and difficult to unify. Chinese culture-loaded words are an important part of Chinese language and culture and are one of the unique national features of Chinese culture. From the perspective of publicity translation, if the translation of Chinese culture-loaded words is to achieve the best translation effect, it is necessary to analyze the deep meaning of Chinese culture-loaded words and the role they play in the article according to the original intent, and that they convey the unique cultural image and connotation of the original Chinese term or phrase. On



this basis, it has become the norm for world civilizations to integrate with each other and learn from each other. It is not only necessary to translate culture-loaded words with the original cultural connotation as much as possible through appropriate and correct translation strategies, but also to do a better job in publicity work and innovate relevant publicity modes. It is a step in striving to create new concepts and new categories that integrate China and foreign countries for Chinese culture transmission by making a better China story, so that the excellent Chinese culture can be understood by the world completely.

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