

On Characteristics and Translation of Ceramic Text

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Abstract: Ceramic text is a kind of special texts, it covers plenty of aspects about ceramics or ceramic techniques or ceramic art or ceramic culture. In this essay, the writer elaborately explains the characteristics of ceramic title from the perspectives of linguistics, textual and culture. By means of explaining the characteristics, readers are able to better get idea of ceramic titles or text. However, Standard translation will promote the spreading and exchange of Chinese ceramic culture.

Keywords: Characteristics; Ceramic title; C-E translation

1. Introduction

With the development of globalization and China's further opening to the outside world, communication between China and foreign countries has been becoming increasingly frequent. And it seems to be quite common for cultural and economic cooperation between China and other countries. On the one hand, China has been becoming increasingly involved in the global affairs; on the other hand, an increasing number of foreigners want to comprehend and have a thorough understanding of China. Publicity material plays a more and more important part in introducing China and China's culture to the outside world and serves as a key bridge for foreign people to get to know China. Various kinds of texts have been translated into English, including Chinese politics, economy, culture, art, literature, etc.. In addition, such foreign-readers-oriented magazines, broadcasts and newspapers as China Daily, Shanghai Daily, China Radio International, have appeared at home and abroad. Moreover, with the exploration of Nanhai No.1 wreck and Nan'ao No.1 wreck, the return of more and more overseas cultural relics, the emergence of ceramic culture tourism, Chinese ceramic arouses people's, especially foreigners' keen interest in ceramic and its culture, even Chinese traditional culture. Therefore, it is quite necessary to improve strategies for translation of Chinese ceramic text in order to boost China's opening up to the outside world.

2. Ceramic Text Features

Ceramic text refers to any phrase or sentence or paragraph or discourse or article which in specialty introduce some information about ceramic ware or ceramic techniques or ceramic art or ceramic culture. Of course, any type of text possesses its own unique features, ceramic text without exceptions. Ceramic title belongs to a pro-

fessional text with the characteristics as ceramic text possesses.

2.1. Linguistic features of ceramic text

First, ceramic text concerns extensive fields, including titles, techniques, designs, decoration, as a particular form of language, is an indispensable part of ceramics. As we all know, for foreign readers or receivers in particular for those who have no idea of any professional knowledge about the ceramic making or the ceramics techniques, it may be not very easy to summarize the style characteristics of the ceramics only by means of observation (Xu Shuqi, 2011). Thus, it seems to be that the ceramic titles are quite important for the viewers to obtain more information about ceramic artworks in detail. In this sense, it is easier for those who have interest in ceramics to get better understanding of ceramics with the help of titles.

Second, a Chinese ceramic title or text contains a lot of ceramic terminologies and culturally-loaded words. In order to get as much information as possible, the ceramic titles are usually long in form and rich in meaning. And there usually exists the usage of nouns modifying nouns. They can be seen as a micro-text containing abundant information which deserves careful probe and research for the translator. For instance, Blue-and-white plate with Design of Immortal Li Making Pills, Yuan Dynasty(1271-1368), in this ceramic title, "Blue-and-white", "Immortal Li Making Pills", "Yuan Dynasty" are Chinese cultural elements, Blue-and-white is the glaze of the ceramic, Immortal Li Making Pills is the subject of the decoration of the ceramic, Yuan Dynasty is the time of the ceramic. Such information helps viewers to get understanding of the ceramic.

Third, the Chinese ceramic texts usually use many Chinese four-character compounds, flowery style, modifiers, repetition and parallel structures due to the Chinese

thinking pattern. These four-character compounds usually convey profound meaning which are popular to Chinese people. These structures are concise, understandable and pleasant to Chinese readers. All these beautiful words or expressions can cause rich associations of foreigners and inspire them to visit or enjoy the ceramic. While in English, there is no four-word structure like Chinese, the style of English version is simple and economical.

2.2. Textual features of ceramic text

Firstly, ceramic text is target-reader centered, aiming at introducing foreigners about China's ceramic, and requires conveying information about ceramic artworks or techniques. According to Reiss, informative text should give full information about the object described in the text to the target readers. Ceramic text is the form of informative text which should provide as much information about ceramics as possible for the target readers. Take a ceramic title for example, it is not difficult to find out that the naming of the ceramics is to try to give such information as ceramic variety, ceramic shape, ornamental motif, accessorizing skills, ceramic glaze, kiln, dynasty, reign mark, ceramic, ceramic painting, inscription (Xu Shuqi, 2011). For instance, Big Plate with Flying Dragon and Dancing Phoenix Pattern during Yongzheng Reign Periods of the Qing Dynasty, this title gives us at least four pieces of information: the making dynasty (the Qing Dynasty), the reign mark (during Yong Zheng Reign Periods), ceramic painting (with Flying Dragon and Dancing Phoenix Pattern), ceramic variety (Big Plate). Another example, Covered jar with design of dragon, clouds and the eight emblems of good augury in contrasting colours, Kangxi period (1661-1722), Qing Dynasty, (1644-1911).

Second, ceramic text belongs to operative text type. According to typology, both content and form are subordinate to the extra-linguistic effect that the text is designed to achieve (Nord, 2001:38). The aim of appellative function of ceramic text is to arouse the target reader's interest in ceramic, to appeal to the reader or intended receiver to visit or to enjoy ceramic. In Nord (2001:42), "if we want to make someone to buy a particular product, we appeal to their real or imagined needs, describing those qualities of the products that are presumed to have positive values in the receivers' value system." With the purpose of attracting a potential customer to purchase a particular product, we should give a detailed description of those qualities of the products possessing positive values for the customer in his or her value system. For example, Jingdezhen blue-and-white paired phoenix vase, Yuan (1271-1368). This title has the exact making time of the ceramic, which provides us with the information that the object has a very long history, and the reign mark, which reveals more important information about the

antique ceramics in attempt to persuade the collectors to buy. Another example, Green color bowl with entwined flower and red characters design within a reserved panel, Daoguang Reign (1821-1850), it also gives detailed important information about the ceramic to attract the customers.

Third, Ceramic text also belongs to expressive text type, the author uses the aesthetic dimension of language. The author or 'sender' is foregrounded, as well as the form of the message (Munday, 2016:115). For example, "Purple and green color plate with design of dragon and grape on yellow ground", aesthetic words are employed in this title to strengthen the vividness of the expression effect. "Purple and green", "dragon and grape" both create a vivid image for the intended readers or receivers.

2.3. Cultural features of ceramic text

Peter Newmark (2001:94) defined "culture as the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression". Chinese ceramic culture develops fast, concerning such fields as in Chinese history, literature, customs, state's laws and regulations, and so on. Such culture elements are dissolved into ceramic, to increase much enchantment to ceramic, to arouse foreign readers' interest in acknowledging Chinese ceramic and conventional customs, so as to boost the communication of Chinese ceramic culture. In the ceramic text, there are lots of technical terms concerning Chinese culture, history and other aspects. And the culture presents strong native resources. For example, Underglaze tricolor vase with design of monkey picking peaches, deer and pine.

In the text, the image of monkey, deer and pine are imprinted on the ceramic body. Monkey picking peaches symbolizes 'fu (blessing)', deer and 'lu (wealth)' are homophones, symbolizes rich and honour, and pine symbolizes 'shou (longevity)'. The combination of the three elements expresses the good wish of 'blessing, wealth and longevity'. Another example, Famille rose bowl with bat design in red color, in this title, bat in Chinese symbolizes fu meaning blessing. In the example, Famille rose bowl with design of Chi-dragon and character "fu" "shou", "fu" "shou" meaning "blessing" and "longevity" in Chinese culture.

3. Translation of Ceramic Text

Ceramic text belongs to a kind of micro-text, length in form and few words in content conveying abundant information to the intended readers or tourists. The C-E translation of ceramic titles is very important. It aims at conveying external characteristics and internal profound cultural connotation of ceramics. Therefore, the translator should follow two basic principles during the course of translation. On the one hand, the usage of terms should be professional, that is to say, the translator should have

commanding of concerned ceramic knowledge and translate the ceramic terminology in accordance with industry specifications. On the other hand, the translation should be target reader-oriented, that is, the translation of ceramic title should conform to the reading and aesthetic appreciation habits, letting the intended readers or tourists experience Chinese ceramic culture to a great extent, to achieve the pretty effects of message passing and ceramic cultural diffusion. So the translation should be in accord with the following two points.

On the one hand, the translator should replenish the missing information in Chinese ceramic title during the course of translation of ceramic titles. In Chinese, the time of ceramic title stresses the long history and abundant culture of the ceramic, while in English, the target readers maybe have no clear idea of such information. Moreover, in Chinese, the usage of words is quite precise and appropriate with features of good coherence and fluency, while in English, the target readers will be confused without the concerned dynasty information. So the translator should add the dynasty information to the translation with explanation and underlines. For instance, Blue and white cup with petal-shaped mouth and peony design, Tongzhi Reign (1862-1874); Famille rose square box with lady design, Xianfeng reign (1851-1861); Another example, Ge-ware glaze fishing junket-shaped jar with eight horses design within a reserved panel, Daoguang reign (1821-850).

On the other hand, the concerning cultural background information should be supplemented in the target language translation. The culture-loaded words in ceramic title in Chinese contain abundant and unique cultural information. The translator should add such background information to the English translation of ceramic title, especially the Chinese historic story and Chinese literary quotation of history. Such information is well-known to Chinese people, but is unfamiliar to the target language readers or tourists. So the translator should supplement such information in the target language translation so that the target readers can get overall and clear information about the ceramic. For example, Blue and white covered vase with a scene of three visits to the thatched cottage,

Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), in this title, the information of the story three visits to the thatched cottage should be supplemented in the English version title. The story three visits to the thatched cottage can be defined as Liubei, a marshal in Han dynasty (BC202-AD220), visited three times Zhu Geliang, a strategist, for policies of governing a state. Another instance, Blue-and-white Jar with a scene of Wang Zhaojun going out of the frontier, Yuan Dynasty(1271-1368), in this title, the information of the character of Wang Zhaojun, a maid of honour, married chief of the Xiongnu, an ancient nationality in China should be noted in the translation. Thus the target readers can better comprehend the profound culture hidden behind the ceramic title.

4. Conclusion

Ceramic text covers very abundant content and connotation, including aspects of techniques, culture, and art, ect. By explaining the characteristics of the titles, readers will better get understanding of ceramic titles, strengthen the interest in ceramic waref and culture. The translator should follow the “target reader-oriented” principle and the “usage of professional words” principle during the course of translation. And the habits of reading and aesthetic appreciation should be taken into consideration in translation to boost the spreading and exchange of ceramic culture.

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