Analysis of English Translation Strategies from the Characteristics of Internet Buzzwords

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Abstract: Due to the development of the internet and network language, a new type of buzzwords, namely Internet buzzwords, has appeared in recent years. This article mainly focuses on the question of "what translation strategies do Internet buzzwords use during their translation." Reasons for the popularity of internet buzzwords and their characteristics are firstly discussed. Then, considering the original form and the translation version, the Internet buzzwords are summarized into three types: Number-plus-suffix type, Double-meaning type, and Chinese-Characteristic type. Finally, the choosing principles of different translation strategies are compared and analyzed, mainly focusing on the functional equivalence theory of Nida and the domestication and foreignization theory of Venuti. At the end of this paper, the author concluded that the translator should choose the translation strategy according to the purpose of translating: use the domestication strategy when transmitting information about specific events or common emotions and use the foreignization strategy when focusing on cultural characteristics. However, the basic meaning of internet buzzwords should always be translated primarily.

Keywords: Internet buzzwords, translation strategy, translation theory, text analysis

1. Introduction

The technology of the internet is constantly developing, making the number of internet users increase year by year. The 49th Statistical Report on the Development of China's Internet Network released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) shows that by December 2021, the scale of Chinese netizens had reached 1.032 billion, which means the use of internet language has increased as well. As a special kind of internet language, internet buzzwords refer to words used frequently in a certain period of time. These words are closely related to focused areas and can reflect specific hot topics. Moreover, translation enables the spread of internet buzzwords across borders and further proliferation. The translation strategies that are used in translating internet buzzwords and the standard of strategy selection have been studied for years, which is conducive to promoting the dissemination of domestic social hot topics and even specific national culture. Lin Gang summarized the classification of seven types of internet language in 2002 [1]. Du Ningning and Liu Yuxiang pointed out that Nida's functional equivalent theory has a guiding effect on the translation of internet Buzzwords [2]. However, the relationship between the classification methods of internet buzzwords and the selection standard of its translation strategies is still unclear. In this paper, the author aims to explore further a general classification method and the relationship between different types of internet

buzzwords and the translation strategies that are used, and attempts to provide suggestions for the selections of internet buzzwords' translation strategies. The second part of the paper is about the reasons for the popularity of internet buzzwords, as well as the categories and characteristics of internet buzzwords. In addition, using the functional equivalent theory of Nida and the domestication and foreignization theory of Lawrence Venuti, the third part of the paper analyses the translation strategies, providing suggestions for the translation. The examples that are used in part two and part three are selected from China Daily.

2. Internet Buzzwords

2.1. Reasons for the Popularity of Internet Buzzwords

Internet buzzwords emerged from the basic language expression form of the internet. The development of the internet provides a new way for the transmission of information, which gives the opportunity to the generation of network language. As a particular part of the network language, Internet buzzwords can reflect the ideological tendencies of society. Colloquialism, playfulness, cultural inclusiveness, and conventionalism are the characteristics of internet buzzwords [2]. In recent years, internet buzzwords have been more and more widely used by people. The reason for the popularity of internet buzzwords can be concluded into two points: it can reflect the common emotions of people; and it can reflect social hot topics. These two effects prove that most internet buzzwords are cultural-loaded [3]. Cultural-loaded words are vocabularies, phrases, and idioms that are unique to a certain culture and can reflect the unique activity of a specific nation. Also, cultural-loaded words are usually accumulated in the long historical process, and the cultural meaning they contain is different from other nations. One of the most important goals of translating is to spread culture, which means translators who deal with internet buzzwords should focus most on their cultural meaning. Internet buzzwords have appeared on the historical stage as a new form of language born with the internet, and have become one of the essential cultural symbols of the new information age.

2.2. The Categories and Characteristics of Internet Buzzwords

Considering the characteristics of the original Chinese words and their English translations (the internet buzzwords and their English translation versions used here are selected from the official website of China Daily, including ten top-used internet buzzwords of 2020 and ten top-used internet buzzwords in 2021), the internet buzzwords selected by the mainstream media on the internet can be mainly divided into three categories. In this part, the internet buzzwords will be analyzed from three aspects: Firstly, the characteristics of the Chinese words together with their English translations. Secondly, the reasons for the occurrence of the words. Thirdly, the general ways of how to translate these internet buzzwords. The functional equivalent theory of Nida and the domestication and foreignization theory of Lawrence Venuti are the main strategies that greatly instructed the analysis.

2.2.1. Number-plus-suffix Type

The representative words for number-plus-suffix type are "Shuang Jian (translated as ease the burden of excessive homework and off-campus tutoring for students undergoing compulsory education)" and "Shuang Tan (translated as carbon peaking and carbon neutrality)." This type of vocabulary is mainly derived from important national policies and has strong timeliness. The original Chinese vocabulary uses a special word-building method: a Chinese character that represents a number plus a special suffix selected from the original text. Using the existing word-building materials in the language as suffixes, adding morphemes according to ideograms, and forming a fixed pattern through combinations have always been important methods of creating fresh buzzwords on the internet. These

ways are also feasible even in real life [4]. The suffix of a number-plus-suffix type buzzword is selected from the original source of the text, being the word that repeats most time in several comparative sentences or paragraphs. In most conditions, the character that acts as the suffix is a noun or a verb, while the character that represents a number should be in accord with the time the suffix appears.

The background of number-plus-suffix type's internet buzzwords is usually related to a certain area that comes out with a new idea or thing that needs to be propagandized. Policy documents are the most frequent resource of this type of internet buzzwords. The reason why the source Chinese words are formed in such a unique way is as follows: Instead of memorizing long paragraphs, a short version concluding numbers and things is easier to understand and remember for the public. Therefore, the government can achieve the effect of promotion and implementation better.

However, when the translators are dealing with these buzzwords, the lack of a similar cultural background in the target language makes the preservation of the original structure difficult, which means word-to-word translation is not suitable for all the number-plus-suffix type internet buzzwords. In order to successfully achieve the purpose of disseminating the core meaning, translators need to explain the detailed meaning of the word in English straightly. Due to the lack of a corresponding cultural background in the target language, domestication is usually not taken into account. Comparing the English translation with the original Chinese word, readers can find out that the translation of this type of buzzwords will be much longer than the original Chinese word, which is similar to the explanation of the Chinese or the original text before the abbreviation, rather than the new words which have been specially formed.

2.2.2. Double-meaning Type

In the original Chinese language environment, some words already have original meanings. However, they are selected as Internet buzzwords because netizens use them to express a new meaning. From the perspective of the words' writing form, the original Chinese words retain their forms and other basic meanings. However, they obtain new meanings which refer to certain phenomena or contexts. Take "Nei Juan," "Tang Ping," "Ji Wa," and "Po Fang" as examples; the original meaning of "Nei Juan" refers to the phenomenon that after a certain type of cultural model has reached a stable form, it becomes difficult to change or evolve and can only become more complex internally. However, "Nei Juan" now refers to the competition between peers, especially the phenomenon that competitors need to pay more effort to compete for limited resources. Instead of meaning the position of lying down, "Tang Ping" refers to the 'Why try hard when you can just skate by?' attitude in recent days. The new meaning of "Ji Wa" is similar to tiger parenting, which can be used as its' translation. As for the word "Po Fang", it no longer means "break through the defensive line". "Moved to tears" or "something gives someone so many feels" is the new meaning that netizens gave this word.

Compared with the first type, the generation of the double-meaning type's buzzwords requires more time. When more and more netizens keep focusing on one specific social phenomenon, a new meaning will be born and given to a specific word with basic old meanings. In the beginning, the original word just temporarily gets the new meaning; however, when the number of users using this word's new meaning becomes larger and larger, the new meaning gradually stabilizes and finally succeeds in becoming one of the basic meanings of the original word. This is how the second type of buzzwords come into being. In this case, the internet buzzwords, as a special variant of the network language, obviously have their unique vocabularies and even specific discourse characteristics [5]. In some situations, the new meaning cannot be steadily held by the original word. When the public is no longer concerned about the meaning of the phenomenon, the meaning will disappear. In the process of translation, due to the common emotional feeling for the specific social phenomenon, to some extent, the meaning of most of the double-meaning type words can be understood by people

from different nations. Translators can either use the footnote or select the corresponding native vocabularies from the target language, which can reduce the difficulty of understanding. The translation strategy will be further analyzed in part three.

2.2.3. Chinese-Characteristic Type

The Chinese-Characteristic type is a unique type of words that only exists in China. It is similar to the first type with strong timeliness; however, these words have strong Chinese characteristics. Most of them are created to serve China's unique national conditions. For example, the expression of "well-off society" and "the nationwide campaign to purify the online environment" are both Chinese-Characteristic type's buzzwords, originating from the Chinese vocabularies "Xiao Kang" and "Qing Lang Xing Dong." To some extent, the source language readers are the same as the target language readers. Both kinds of readers are exposed to the word for the first time.

These types of buzzwords emerged during the rapid development of the country. They are created in order to match the needs of various fields. Being the most difficult type for the target language readers to read and understand, the special meanings of Chinese characteristics should be translated accurately, which carries the greatest difficulty of translation as well. How to strike a balance between the inner meaning and the external form is the biggest problem of translation. By analyzing the official translated version of the example words, translators may find out that giving priority to interpreting the inner meaning of the words is usually the better solution.

3. The Analysis of Translation Strategies of Internet Buzzwords

The functional equivalent theory of Nida proposes the idea that the translation process should focus on the equivalence of vocabulary, structure of sentences, context, and writing style [6]. Translators should gradually improve their translation based on the understanding of the functional equivalent theory of Nida, so that the translation of Internet buzzwords can be maintained of high quality. Internet buzzwords users do not need to promote or forbid those words, for they are the result of the production of society [7]. Zhao Dandan emphasizes that grammar and vocabulary have important influences on the output of an authentic translation [8]. The author believes that the uniqueness of internet buzzwords is reflected in their specific meaning in certain periods or situations. Therefore, when translating internet buzzwords, the highest priority should be given to retaining the meaning of the words. And the translator's main task is to ensure that the meaning of a word is accurately conveyed.

Because of the unique word-building methods, number-plus-suffix type's internet buzzwords cannot be directly translated into English. Using "word-to-word translation" will destroy the meaning of words, so words of this type should be translated by paraphrasing. For example, the basic meaning of the word "Shuang Jian" is actually the merger of a decrease in two aspects: to ease the burden of excessive homework and off-campus tutoring. Adding the subject of the action, these buzzwords can be translated into: "ease the burden of excessive homework and off-campus tutoring for students undergoing compulsory education." The retaining of the original form is not the most important thing when translating. The inner meaning of the word should be explained first, which means the final translation result is to directly explain the exact meaning of the internet buzzwords in the target language. Translators should consider the symmetry of the structure and choose a more concise way to explain it as well.

Translators' work often presents a preference for domestication or foreignization, which, according to Venuti's definition, focus on different things. Domestication adheres to the current mainstream values of the target language, using conservative ways to paraphrase the original text and make the text cater to local canons, publishing trends, and political needs. Foreignization deviates

from the dominant local values, preserving the linguistic and cultural differences of the source language [9]. When the translator is faced with a double-meaning type's internet buzzword, the translation strategies can be concluded into two types: On one hand, if the target language consists of words with the same or similar meaning as the original Chinese words, the translators can directly use the words. For example, "Nei Juan" has the same meaning as "involution," which can be a reasonable version of the translation. The advantage of this method is that it can make the target language readers understand the meaning of the word quickly. Nevertheless, the disadvantage is that it cannot fully retain the characteristics and meaning of the source language. Some features of the original context cannot be fully interpreted due to domestication. On the other hand, the second way of translating is to make a "word-to-word translation" for the original form and add an accurate meaning by using footnotes. Annotate the "word-to-word translation" in quotation marks and explain the new meaning with footnotes. For example, the translation of "Tang Ping" will be "lie down-the 'Why try hard when you can just skate by?' mentality". The translation is more important in terms of its cultural connotations [10]. The author believes that the second way of translation is better, because the translation of the internet buzzwords should give its highest priority to the cultural core it contains. When different cultures have the same or similar understanding of a specific social phenomenon, what translators should do is not choose the given solution. The translator's ultimate goal is not to make the target language readers understand. Keeping the original language environment can help the target language readers understand the same concept in another country.

Internet buzzwords of the Chinese-Characteristic type are more complex to deal with than the first two types. To summarize the previous content: the translation method of the number-plus-suffix type's internet buzzwords is to explain the inner meaning of the vocabulary in detail with the target language. The translation method of the double-meaning type's internet buzzwords is to translate the name literally and explain it with footnotes or use synonyms straightly to replace the original one. What makes the Chinese-Characteristic type's internet buzzwords different from the other two types is the unique Chinese characteristics they contain. Therefore, one of the important tasks of the translator is to preserve Chinese characteristics as much as possible. Meanwhile, the translation should not affect the reader's understanding of the meaning as well. This type of buzzwords usually lacks a corresponding expression form. Translators can form a new proprietary word in English with the help of the original meaning of the Chinese vocabulary. Besides, translators can also abandon the literal meaning of the Chinese version and only retain the metaphor meaning. For example, the official version of "Xiao Kang She Hu" is "well-off society," which is a new vocabulary with Chinese characteristics. While the translation of "Qing Lang Xing Dong" is "nationwide campaign to purify the online environment," which is a detailed explanation of the original Chinese word. The author considered that the way of forming new words would be difficult for readers to understand in the early period. However, it is more conducive for the vocabulary to maintain Chinese characteristics, which is a way that can not only achieve the purpose of transmitting information but also spread the culture of the source language to the greatest extent.

4. Conclusion

There is no doubt that Internet buzzwords have become a new way to transmit information. Although they are in different forms, transmitting information is their common function. On the one hand, internet buzzwords can reflect specific social phenomena, which can be news events that have been frequently discussed, concepts emerging in a certain field that has strong impacts or new ideas publicized in the policies that need to be known by the public. On the other hand, internet buzzwords can arouse emotional resonance between different countries or even different cultures, thereby causing discussions on certain events among people from different cultural backgrounds. For the three different types of Internet buzzwords (Number-plus-suffix type, Double-meaning type, and Chinese-

Characteristic type), translators should choose appropriate translation strategies in order to convey the information correctly. Among them, the functional equivalence theory of Nida and the domestication and foreignization theory of Venuti play an important role in the translating process. Translators should pay special attention to the commonalities or similarities between different cultures.

Number-plus-suffix type buzzwords mostly adopt the basic method of explaining the meaning of the original words, ensuring that the target language's readers can fully understand the meaning of the words. Double-meaning type buzzwords can be replaced by specific expressions with similar meanings, or they can be further explained with the help of footnotes. Chinese-Characteristic type buzzwords should maintain their Chinese characteristics as much as possible; however, the original meaning shouldn't be mistranslated. Translators can retain those cultural characteristics with the help of creating new words. The author finds that translators often use foreignizing strategy when focusing on cultural transmitting and domesticating strategy when focusing on conveying basic meaning. To sum up, translators should use a variety of translation theories flexibly to translate internet buzzwords, so as to help transmit national cultures and discuss common emotions.

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