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A Study on the Overseas Communication of the Analects of Confucius

Yanan Chai, Cong Zhang*
Beijing Institute Of Graphic Communication, Beijing, China.
*Corresponding author

Abstract

Confucius is one of the greatest thinkers in human history. His thoughts have not only influenced Chinese history for more than two thousand years, but also become the common wealth of human civilisation. As a classic work of Chinese Confucian culture, Confucius' lifelong work, The Analects, is a model of traditional Chinese culture and philosophy, and plays a pivotal role in cross-cultural communication. This paper applies the methods of literature research, inductive research and content analysis to propose specific countermeasures to promote the "going out" of Chinese canonical books through a profound analysis of the current situation of the dissemination of the most representative philosophical canon, the Analects, overseas, in order to promote the wider dissemination of Chinese philosophical thought overseas.

Keywords

The Analects of Confucius; International communication; Problems and difficulties; Communication strategy

Introduction

As the essence of traditional Chinese culture, the translation and dissemination of the canonical books to foreign countries can enhance China's image and strengthen the country's cultural soft power. According to General Secretary Xi Jinping, in order to endeavour to improve the power of international discourse, it is necessary to strengthen the construction of international communication capacity and carefully build a foreign discourse system, only in this way can we tell a good Chinese story and disseminate a good Chinese voice. {As the essence of traditional Chinese culture, the foreign translation and dissemination of The Analects of Confucius plays an important role in enhancing China's image and promoting cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world.

The first English translation of The Analects of Confucius was published in 1691, and since then, various English translations of The Analects of Confucius have appeared overseas for more than three hundred years. At a rough count, there are now more than forty English translations of The Analects of Confucius. These translations are a valuable global humanistic treasure that can be explored and learnt from to enhance the influence of Chinese culture in the world in the 21st century.

This paper takes the English translations of The Analects of Confucius in Google Scholar, Amazon.com, and other overseas mainstream media as an entry point, and uses the participatory observation method to comprehensively analyse the predicaments of each version of The Analects of Confucius in the process of foreign dissemination, and explores effective paths to enhance the effect of overseas dissemination of Chinese canonical literature by analysing the current situation, with a view to providing useful information for the successful integration of Chinese canonical literature into the mainstream literary markets of Europe and the United

States. The study also analyses the current situation and discusses effective ways to enhance the effectiveness of overseas dissemination of Chinese canonical literature, with a view to providing useful reference for the successful integration of Chinese canonical literature into the mainstream literary markets of Europe and America.

Problems Existing in the Process of Overseas Dissemination and Sale of English Translations of Various Versions of The Analects of Confucius

Sales of the English translation of the Analects of Confucius need to be improved

Amazon.com is a global online book sales platform with more than 6.1 billion visits per year. It has a high-quality comprehensive bibliographic database and a convenient book retrieval system, which can recommend books to readers through different ways, and it is also one of the main channels for foreign readers to buy books. Amazon.com classifies books according to their contents, and each book may be classified in different categories depending on the classification method. According to the data of Amazon.com, the sales ranking of the English translation of The Analects of Confucius is not satisfactory in the categories of "Oriental Religions and Religious Scriptures", "Chinese Literature" and "Oriental Philosophy". The sales ranking of the English translation of The Analects of Confucius is not satisfactory in the categories of "Eastern Religions and Religious Texts", "Chinese Literature" and "Eastern Philosophy".

Take Liu Dianjue's translation as an example, which is the best-selling translation among the well-known translations. In the "Eastern Religions and Religious Texts" category, the sales of Liu Dianjue's translation of the Analects of Confucius (total sales rank #62056) were much lower than those of the Tao Te Ching (total sales rank #3607). There is also a big gap between the sales of "Autobiography of a Yogi" (#2256 in total sales), which is ranked first in the category of "Eastern Religions and Philosophy", and the sales of Liu Dianjue's translation of "The Analects of Confucius" (#62056 in total sales) are much lower than the sales of "Tao Te Ching" (#3607 in total sales). In addition, Liu Dianjue's translation ranked 14th in the category of "Chinese Literature" and 638th in the category of "Oriental Philosophy".

As a representative classic work in the Chinese canon, the dissemination and sales of the Analects of Confucius in foreign countries do not match its status in literature and philosophy, which is worthy of our deep thoughts.

Translations with high sales volume are mostly from foreign translators and publishers.

In terms of sales ranking, except for Liu Dianjue's translation of The Analects of Confucius, the rest of the best-selling translations are mostly by foreign sinologists. The publishers of the translations are all foreign publishers, such as Penguin (Liu Tienjue's translation), Ballantine (An Lezhe's translation), Trübner & Co (Rieger's translation), Hackett Publishing Company (Edward Slingerlund's translation), Columbia University Press (the Bai's translation), and the Bai's translation. Hackett Publishing Company (Edward Slingerlund), Columbia University Press (Mr and Mrs White's translation), George Allen & Unwin (Arthur Wylie's translation). At this level, many well-known translators and publishers in China have failed to play a good role in

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promoting the dissemination of traditional Chinese classics to foreign countries. In opening Confucius Institutes, teaching Chinese language and spreading culture to foreign countries, we need to pay attention to the problem of "localisation" of traditional Chinese classics, and we need to guide and support domestic translators and publishers to make a breakthrough in this field, and to gradually embark on the international stage of English translation of Chinese classics.

From the feedback of readers, there is still much room for improvement at the level of translations

Although there are a large number of English translations of The Analects of Confucius at present, these translations fail to meet the reading needs of people at different levels for specific readers. Therefore, there is still a lot of work to be considered and perfected in terms of the improvement and innovation of the translations. By comprehensively analysing the readers' comments on Amazon.com, we find that the existing well-known translations still have the following shortcomings: Firstly, some of the translations lack the introduction of historical, cultural and other background information, such as the biography of Confucius, the historical status of the Analects of Confucius, and its important value in Chinese society, etc., which results in the readers failing to build up a macroscopic understanding of Chinese history and culture, and thus affects the effectiveness of communication and dissemination. The effect of communication and dissemination is thus affected. Secondly, some translations fail to make appropriate interpretations and remarks on some obscure concepts and controversial views in the translation, which makes overseas readers encounter difficulties in the process of reading, thus increasing the cost of comprehension and lowering the interest in reading. Thirdly, there is a lack of translations for non-specialist readers or fast readers. Such translations should be concise, popular and interesting, and be able to vividly present the stories of Chinese culture and philosophy.

Feasible Suggestions for Enhancing the Effectiveness of Overseas Dissemination of Chinese Canonical Books

Translator's point of view: choosing the right translator

In the process of literary works and cultural dissemination, the translator is undoubtedly in a pivotal position. Whether it is in the selection of translated text, understanding and interpretation of the original text, or the choice of translation strategy and the dissemination and acceptance of the translated text, to a large extent, he plays a decisive role in all aspects of translation, and thus is the core subject of translation and dissemination. Many scholars in China have conducted in-depth discussions on the translator mode, and believe that there are three main translator modes: (1) the Chinese native translator mode, which advocates that the foreign translation of literature should be undertaken mainly by Chinese native translators to introduce Chinese culture comprehensively and accurately to the Western intelligentsia, in order to avoid intentional or unintentional cultural misinterpretation caused by the translation process. (2) The Sinologist-Translator Model, which advocates the use of sinologists as translators and naturalised translation as the realisation mode of the strategy of "going out" of Chinese literature. {3}(3) Chinese-Western model, advocating "Chinese native translator + foreign sinologist" model {4}, or "Western sinologist + Chinese native translator" of the most operable Chinese-Western translator model {5}. However, it should be pointed out that Chinese and foreign

translators will have different translation concepts in the process of joint translation, such as Yang Xianyi's and Dai Naidian's different viewpoints about faithfulness and creativity in the translation process. Moreover, the differences and similarities between the views of Chinese and foreign translators on the selection of the translation base text, the understanding of the content, the selection of translation strategies, and the changes and deletions of chapters in the translated text are all issues that need to be considered. In addition, in terms of text selection, the foreign translation of Chinese canonical books should take into account the academic status of the original works and their existing influence abroad, not only to tell a good Chinese story, but also to conform to the reading interests of foreign readers, and to establish a mechanism for selecting materials for intercultural dialogue. The collective wisdom of experts, scholars, publishers, literary agents, copyright brokers, translators, mass media, bookstores and other types of translation intermediaries in the selection of translation materials can be effectively utilised through preliminary market surveys of foreign readers, so as to select outstanding literary works that embody typical Chinese cultural ideas and are easy to be accepted by foreign readers. Secondly, appropriate translation strategies should be adopted to convey the heaviness of Chinese culture and at the same time the fluency of the text. In the process of translating a work into English, the translator should combine his or her own study of the original work and construct his or her own discourse system in the translation. He should also make clear the target readers, fully consider their cultural background and aesthetic interests, and apply suitable translation strategies to make the translation popular, interesting, vivid and readable, so that the translated book has distinctive features and strong attraction to the readers, and by increasing the acceptance of the translated book by the western readers, he can promote cultural communication in this way.

Audience perspective: considering the needs of the audience

In the process of translation, the subjectivity of the translator is indisputable, but the goodness of a translation must ultimately be tested by the consumers (i.e. readers). Since the ultimate goal of translation is cultural exchange and dissemination, the translated content needs to be accepted and recognised by Western readers in order to achieve the goal of spreading Confucianism to the West. In the process of translation, translators should fully consider the audience factor and adopt different translation strategies for different reader groups. According to the empirical research of domestic scholars [6], the readers of the English translation of The Analects of Confucius can be roughly divided into two categories: the first category is scholars and English learners at home and abroad. Scholars often analyse translation techniques or conduct comparative studies of different translations, with the ultimate goal of providing professional advice on the English translation of canonical texts and improving the quality and acceptance of translations. Learners, on the other hand, take the initiative to read the English translation of the Analects from the perspective of English-Chinese comparison and language acquisition in order to improve their English proficiency and translation ability. This part of the population is relatively fixed. The second group is overseas readers who are interested in Chinese culture and want to learn about Confucianism, traditional Chinese culture and oriental countries through reading The Analects of Confucius. This group is a "potential" and "flexible" audience for The Analects. We should take targeted measures to cater for the needs of this readership, and provide non-specialist readers with translations that are fast-reading, popular, interesting and vivid, while effectively disseminating traditional Chinese culture. The government can also consider setting up a special category for the Analects of Confucius or canonical books in the National Book Awards, rewarding outstanding translators and translations, so as to vigorously support major publishing houses in producing more and better English translations of the Analects of

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Confucius.

Channel Perspective: Broadening the Channels of Dissemination

In order to improve the international dissemination effect of the English translation of The Analects, we not only need to deeply grasp the needs of readers and establish a professional and efficient team of translators, but also need to make full use of the publishing and dissemination channels and various means of dissemination in the English-speaking world. To this end, we need to strengthen in-depth cooperation with foreign publishers. Domestic publishers can use capital means to merge or acquire foreign book publishers, set up editorial offices, publishing houses or overseas branches, and plan, formulate, select translators, edit, review, produce and publish books for Western readers, so as to realise optimal allocation of translation materials, translation contents, publishing resources and technology. The optimisation of translation selection, translation content, publishing resources and technology. In addition, it will also promote exchanges and co-operation between translators and foreign literary agents and publishing agents, expand the forms and types of copyright export in all aspects, and realise integrated development with various media. We will strive to form a model in which Chinese government agencies fund translation projects, and domestic and foreign publishing organisations negotiate on their own and publish them in accordance with market-oriented operation.

Technology perspective: applying emerging technologies

Domestic technologies in digital publishing and network mobile reading can be used to establish more digital mobile libraries abroad, popularise Chinese books among foreign student groups, and pay attention to the status of book clubs in the book industry in the world. In terms of publishing forms, besides launching Kindle e-books like the English translation of Jin Anping's The Analects of Confucius, which is convenient for readers to buy and read, it is also necessary to combine the aesthetic interests of foreign readers with the content and develop corresponding book software, games, new media picture books and interactive experiences of sound, video and virtual reality technology [7], so as to present the content of the books in an all-rounded and multimodal way and attract more foreign readers.

Conclusion

By reviewing, analysing and summarizing the English translations of The Analects of Confucius and its overseas dissemination by scholars at home and abroad, this paper summarizes the problems existing in the overseas dissemination of the translations of The Analects of Confucius by using the method of literature research, inductive research and content analysis as the research methods, and on the basis of which, it seriously probes the basis of the theoretical research to open up and update new channels for the development of cultural dissemination and to promote the foreign dissemination of the Chinese cultural canons, in order to explore feasible paths for "telling the Chinese story and disseminating the Chinese voice".