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Translation Analysis of Sensoji Temple Guanyin Divination from the Perspective of J. House's Translation Quality Assessment Model

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Abstract:

Based on the Translation Quality Assessment Model, this paper investigates the translation of religious divination using the Sensoji temple Guanyin Divination as the corpus. It aims to explore the characteristics of translation and the value and image of Buddhism portrayed from the perspective of field, tenor, and mode in the register framework. The goal is to reveal the translations' conceptual and interpersonal functions and overt and covert features. The corpus analysis indicates that most translations of divination are rendered in the genre of Chinese-style regulated verse, which is rich in Chinese connotations. At the field level, the translations reproduce the features of the source text using metaphors; at the tenor level, the translations employ the second-person pronouns and imperative sentences to bring the interpersonal distance between the translators and the readers closer and to enhance the emotional expression; at the mode level, the translators adopt a colloquial language style to make the translations more accessible, to effectively convey the interpersonal functions of the source text. Overall, the translations tend toward overt translation, highlighting the source text's distinctive information and religious essence to achieve reader-translation interaction. At the same time, a certain degree of covert translation is also present. Given the limited research on the analysis of religious text translations, this study fills a gap in the field and provides new perspectives for further exploration in this domain.

Keywords:

Translation; Divination; Translation Quality Assessment Model

1.Introduction

During the Tang Dynasty, Japan dispatched envoys to China for cultural exchange. As part of traditional Chinese culture, divination was introduced to Japan and has been preserved. The corpus of this study focuses on the Sensoji temple Guanyin Divination, which originated from the Tianzhu Lingqian in the Southern Song Dynasty in China. These texts were introduced to Japan during the Kamakura period, merged with the worship of Ganzan Daishi during the Muromachi period, and evolved into the Guanyin Baiqian (Lin Guop-

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ing[3]). The divination texts are composed in five-character regulated verse, primarily written in Chinese characters, and embody strong religious features.

Regarding the study of religious texts, Zhang Zhuo[5], starting from the religions of China's ethnic minorities, integrated scriptures, historical records, Daoist writings, and gazetteers to explore issues related to minority history and culture. Li Guoping[2] conducted a study of Luan Shu (鸞書) in the Chaozhou region of China and launched a study of religious texts in conjunction with religious activity called Fu Luan (扶鸞). In religious text translation, Yuan Chaoyun[4] investigated the third climax of Daoist scripture translation, focusing on translation and religious ideologies. The analysis of translation in the Sensoji temple Guanyin Divination combines translation studies with religious studies, revealing the overt and covert features of translation and the specific strategies employed. This research can fill the gap in the study of religious text translation, providing new ideas for research in this field.

2.Materials and Methods

Juliane House categorizes translation into overt translation and covert translation. Based on this, the Translation Quality Assessment Model is developed. Overt translation means that translators should retain the functional characteristics of the source text as much as possible without excessive cultural adaptation, thus leaving texts with obvious traces of translation. Covert translation employs a culture filter to selectively adjust cultural elements from the source language, achieving functional equivalence in the target culture. The basic concept of House's Translation Quality Assessment Model is the equivalence between the target and source texts. This model employs a comprehensive approach to analyze the source and target texts from three distinct perspectives: register, text and genre, and obtains the matching degree of the text function. The assessment of translation quality primarily involves language/text, register, and genre. This paper intends to conduct a comparative analysis of the source text and the translated text from the three register components—field, tenor, and mode—to evaluate the translation quality comprehensively.

3.Results and Discussion

Based on the House's Translation Quality Assessment Model, this section researches and analyzes the translation of vocabulary, sentence structure, and rhetoric in Sensoji temple Guanyin Divination from three perspectives: field, tenor, and mode. It also explores translation's interpersonal and conceptual functions and uncovers the overt and covert characteristics.

3.1. At the Level of Field

This section analyzes the use of metaphor in the Sensoji temple Guanyin Divination from the perspective of the field. By analyzing the influence of the images of "moon" and "cloud" and different colors on the metaphorical connotation, this section emphasizes the cultural connotation and further reproduces the context of the original, demonstrating the feature of overt translation.

(1)ST: 擧頭看皎月

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TT: You can meet good change, like to see the bright moon in the clear sky, the clouds has gone.

(2)ST: 暗雲侵月桂

TT: Just like black clouds cover moonlight, many accidents will happen.

(3)ST: 紅雲隨步起

TT: Red clouds move and cover your way.

For example, the “moon” in Example 1 is one of the common images in the signature, and by browsing the signature, it can be found that the signature is auspicious. The bright moon symbolizes auspiciousness and metaphorically represents good luck within the moon. It embodies the beautiful wishes of the seekers and highlights the strong Chinese characteristics. The Sensoji temple Guanyin Divination extensively uses natural images, comparing natural phenomena to the successes and ups and downs that may be encountered in life’s journey. These natural phenomena serve as the medium of metaphor and add profound cultural connotations to the metaphorical content due to their specific cultural significance. From the field perspective, Cases 1, 2 and 3 all describe a certain natural scene. The “moon” in Case 1 is one of the common images. The bright moon symbolizes auspiciousness. The metaphor of good luck about the moon not only conveys the good wishes of the seeker but also highlights the strong Chinese characteristics. Cases 2 and 3 are about the metaphor of “cloud”. “Black clouds” symbolize the difficulties and obstructed fortune, while “red clouds” signify the occurrence of good things. The same image has opposite meanings due to different colors. In Chinese culture, different colors have specific cultural connotations. “Red” symbolizes good fortune and auspiciousness, and “black” indicates hardship and depression. Combining these colors with the “cloud” gives the metaphor a unique cultural meaning.

Field is the choice of language expression in a particular context to achieve a specific communicative purpose. Different fields will affect the choice of words and sentence patterns. The Chinese are good at conveying profound meanings through metaphors with the help of images, and the language is subtle and full of tension. In order to reproduce the context of the original text and realize the communicative purpose of readers to interpret the life fortune implied by the divination, the translation adopts the strategy of literal translation. This strategy not only preserves the characteristics of the original text and shows its conceptual function but also fully embodies the Chinese characteristics of the images and highlights the Chinese elements in Japanese Buddhism, thus attracting the interest of tourists and realizing the interpersonal function of the original text. This translation method is in line with the characteristics of overt translation.

3.2. At the Level of Tenor

This section explores the impact of the second person “you” on the interpersonal function of the translation from the perspective of tenor by analyzing the person and sentence structure in the translation. The use of imperative sentences in the translation enhances emotional meaning, achieves tenor equivalence, and reflects covert translation characteristics. It is in line with the target language context.

(4)ST: 貴人相遇處

TT: Also you meet a great person with honor who helps you.

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(5)ST: 有禄興家業

TT: You can get both treasure and dignity. Your family business will be really prosperous.

(6)ST: 幸乞陰公祐

TT: Do your best and ask for help of others. Then you will be able to catch good fortune.

In Cases 4 and 5, the translations establish a connection with the reader through the second person "you". Tenor reflects the identity of the people involved in language communication and the relationships between them. Everyone in society is in a certain network of relationships. Their roles are changed in the process of communication. The existence and dynamics of these relationships create a variety of tenors that influence the degree of formality in the use of language. As divination, its audience includes a wide and diverse range of Buddhist believers or tourists. Therefore, the use of "you" in the translation not only directly answers the reader's questions but also realizes the interpersonal function of the translation by bringing people closer together and intensifying emotions.

In Case 6, the translation is presented as an imperative sentence, instructing the reader from the perspective of the superior. This form demonstrates the Buddhist idea of universal love for all beings and, at the same time, enhances the reader's reading experience. Tenor reflects the ability of language to fulfill communicative intent in a particular situation, such as to impart, persuade, admonish, or exhort. The main purpose of the divination is to provide hints and psychological support for seekers. Therefore, the translation achieves tenor equivalence by strengthening the emotional color, which meets the communicative intent and conforms to the characteristics of covert translation.

3.3. At the Level of Mode

This section analyzes and studies abbreviations in the translation from the perspective of mode. Abbreviations, as an informal language style, bring readers closer to the text, further promote the translation to convey the meaning of the original and construct Buddhist images. It achieves the purpose of interpersonal communication in translation.

(7)ST: 禄馬照前程

TT: everything will go well you'll be satisfied with better position and wealth.

(8)ST: 舊憂終是退

TT: What you've been troubled for a long time will soon begin to fade away.

Mode refers to the way and style of language expression, which mainly includes oral and written forms, formal and informal styles, and the degree of participation, such as monologue, dialog, etc. Cases 7 and 8 translations have a simple sentence structure and are of moderate length. Abbreviations such as "you'll" and "you've" are used in the translations, which are in line with the characteristics of spoken English and present an informal style. Because the divination aims to exhort believers and promote religious ideas, and in combination with the purpose of the preceding text and the analysis of the communicative relationship, the transla-

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tion here adopts a colloquial way of expression. Such a translation style not only brings the reader closer but also builds the image of Buddhism as tolerant and loving, thus successfully realizing the interpersonal function of the source text.

4.Conclusion

This paper takes the House's Translation Quality Assessment Model as the theoretical framework, selects Sensoji temple Guanyin divination as the research corpus, and analyzes them from the perspective of the register. At the level of the field, the translation reproduces the features of the source text through metaphor; at the level of tenor, the translation uses the expressions of the second person and imperative sentence to bring the relationship with the readers closer and to strengthen the transmission of emotion; at the level of mode, the translation presents a colloquial language style which makes the translation more approachable, thus realizing the interpersonal function of the source text. On the whole, the translation presents the characteristics of overt translation, which promotes reader-translation interaction and displays religious colors by retaining the characteristic information of the original text. However, the strategy of covert translation is also used in specific contexts. In conclusion, in the translation of religious divination, the accuracy of content and religious color should be given priority. It is also necessary to balance the text's functionality and readability to ensure the translation's overall quality.

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