

On the Perspective of Cross-Cultural Communication, the Contemporary Value and Optimization Path of English Translation of Qilu Folk Tourism Culture Terms

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Abstract

As China gradually deepens cross-cultural exchanges, it is essential to effectively communicate China's story and spread Chinese culture, focusing on showcasing a true, three-dimensional, and comprehensive China. The core issue of telling China's story urgently needs to be explored from the perspective of the dissemination of folk tourism culture, with folk tourism culture terms as the entry point. Through relevant literature research, this paper analyzes the contemporary value of the English translation of folk tourism culture terms in cross-cultural communication. Relying on Shandong's Qilu folk customs, the paper explores the “source” of Confucian culture and elements of Chinese civilization. It elaborates on the realistic background of the English translation of Qilu folk culture terms from four aspects: language, semantics, pragmatics, and culture. By conducting case analyses on provincial scenic spots, museums, memorials, and folk museums, the paper aims to uncover the connotations of folk culture, restore the original appearance, recreate the charm, harmonize differences, and narrate quality. It outlines an optimization mechanism for the English translation of Qilu folk tourism culture terms, aiming to better guide and standardize the practice.

Key words: Cross-cultural communication; Qilu folk customs; Tourism culture terms; English translation

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1. TOURISM CULTURE TERMS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

1.1 Definition of Qilu Folk Tourism Culture Terms

The study of cultural terms first emerged in the United States in the 1960s. In China, this concept was formally introduced 30 years later than in the United States. Scholars have various opinions on the definition of cultural terms. However, they agree that cultural terms, as words with unique cultural connotations, represent the cultural characteristics and habits inherent to specific cultural contexts. These terms are often untranslatable into other languages directly. The definition of “folk customs” dates back to the ancient Chinese dictionary “Shuowen Jiezi,” where “customs” were interpreted as “habits.” In modern terms, folk customs are the customs and habits generated by the working people of a country or nation in their daily lives and passed down through generations. These customs constrain people's behavior and consciousness, vividly embodying the national cultural spirit. Folk culture manifests in two forms: spiritual culture and material culture. In this paper, we focus on folk culture terms in the scenic spots of Qilu land. These terms are often carried through public notices, official website texts, and promotional materials of tourist

attractions, preserving and disseminating unique lifestyles, customs, and spiritual outlooks.

1.2 Contemporary Interpretation of the English Translation of Qilu Folk Tourism Culture Terms

1.2.1 Responding to International Cross-Cultural Communication Needs

The 18th Annual Conference on Cross-Cultural Studies in China in 2022 deeply discussed the theme “Telling China’s Story Well and Promoting Mutual Learning Among Civilizations.” At the 2023 Confucian Classics Cross-Language Recitation Conference, Cheng Yan from China emphasized that Chinese civilization, as a model of dialogical civilization, contributes Chinese wisdom to the coexistence and mutual learning of different civilizations. This is crucial for telling China’s story well and enhancing international discourse power. Currently, international understanding of Chinese culture remains superficial, limited to aspects such as culinary and architectural culture, with a lack of comprehension regarding Chinese values (Yu & Pan, 2021). Therefore, the tourism industry must effectively tell China’s story, presenting a true, three-dimensional, and comprehensive China. Qilu folk culture, an important branch of Chinese culture, is rooted in and derived from ancient Confucian thought, folk labor, daily practices, and rituals, representing a unique cultural symbol of China. Especially its representative Confucian thought, which, despite the passage of time, continues to profoundly influence the thinking and spiritual outlook of the Chinese people, holding a unique position in traditional Chinese culture.

1.2.2 Catering to the Trend of High-Quality Cultural and Tourism Development

The integration of culture and tourism has been a significant topic in China’s tourism development in recent years. In 2017, the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed that China’s economy is transitioning from a phase of rapid growth to high-quality development. In every step of China’s tourism industry development, culture plays an extremely important role. To highlight unique tourism resources and destinations, the dissemination of historical culture is indispensable. Tourism culture terms, as the most typical means of cross-cultural communication, carry rich cultural connotations. The development of English translations of tourism culture terms can not only enhance the international appeal of tourism destinations but also boost cultural confidence through tourism. The repeated analysis and debate of cultural terms lead to a more accurate understanding of our culture. Based on the current new development stage, it is essential to explore the deep connotations of folk tourism culture terms and standardize the development of tourism English translations. This approach not only implements the new development concept but also contributes to national image building.

However, this is a long process that requires joint efforts from various parties. Therefore, it is necessary to promote systematic reforms and upgrades in tourism English translations to achieve high-quality cultural and tourism development.

1.3 Research Overview of the English Translation of Qilu Folk Tourism Terms from the Perspective of Cross-Cultural Communication

Chinese traditional culture is extensive and profound, with a long history, and it has inherited a large number of cultural terms. As cross-cultural exchanges continue to expand, how to enhance the international communication power of Chinese culture through cultural English translation has become a topic of interest. Currently, research on the English translation of folk culture terms focuses on books, dramas, and film and television works. There is also a small number of studies that explore translation strategies and error correction from the perspective of regional tourism development. For example, Zhu Yanning and Xiang Dan (2018) comprehensively analyzed the current status and techniques of tourism English translation in ethnically distinctive tourist attractions from a macro perspective. Long Ting, Gong Yun, and Liu Xuan (2018) used signs from Jiangxi 5A scenic spots to analyze typical cases of tourism English translation from linguistic, cultural, and communicative perspectives. Sun Jiehan (2015) and Hu Juan (2015), among others, explored the strategies for English translation of folk culture tourism texts from the perspectives of eco-translatology and relevance theory. Luo Jiansheng and Li Minjie (2015) analyzed the current status of sign translation in western tourist attractions and proposed methods such as addition, omission, compilation, paraphrasing, reduction, merging, and modification, which have positive significance for guiding the practice of cultural term English translation.

Reviewing these studies, we can see that scholars have already proposed relatively comprehensive strategies for the English translation of cultural terms and have actively applied them to the practice of cultural term translation, achieving many results. However, no researchers have yet focused their studies on the English translation of Qilu folk culture terms in tourism.

2. DEVELOPMENTAL BOTTLENECKS IN THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF QILU FOLK TOURISM TERMS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

2.1 Linguistic Bottlenecks in English Translation

During the research of tourist attractions, museums, and memorials, the most common errors found are at the

linguistic level. Linguistic errors refer to the presence of non-standard language in the translation of tourism folk culture terms, making it difficult for the translation to convey the true meaning and achieve the desired effect. The most typical linguistic errors can be classified into the following four types:

- **Spelling Errors:** These errors are quite evident. For example, “Central Square” in Jinan was mistranslated as “Sentre Square,” while the correct translation should be “Centre Square.”

- **Chinglish:** This refers to mechanically and rigidly translating Chinese folk culture terms into English in a way that does not conform to English expression habits, making it difficult for foreign visitors to understand. For instance, the typical Chinglish translation of “马到成功” as “Success Immediately Upon Arrival” is a literal translation of the Chinese characters. It should be translated as “Achieving Immediate Success.”

- **Phonetic Translations:** This involves translating folk culture terms using pinyin. For example, in the Weifang Shihu Garden Museum, “家风族训” was translated as “jia feng zu xun,” which should be translated as “Family Traditions and Precepts.”

- **Grammatical Errors:** These involve errors in word collocation and sentence structure.

2.2 Semantic Bottlenecks in English Translation

Semantic bottlenecks mainly manifest in the inappropriate use of words and inconsistent translations of names.

- **Inappropriate Use of Words:** The translation of Qilu folk culture terms should align with the specific historical context and use appropriate words that match the historical conditions.

- **Inconsistent Translations:** For example, in Daming Lake Scenic Area, “Beijige” has different translations in various contexts. In the “Beijige Pier Boarding Notice,” it is translated as “North Polar Temple,” while on the Beijige plaque, it is translated as “the Polar is Temple,” which can cause ambiguity.

2.3 Pragmatic Bottlenecks in English Translation

At the pragmatic level, due to cultural differences and insufficient understanding of each other’s cultural backgrounds, as well as differences in expression habits and methods, conflicts and misunderstandings are likely to occur in the process of translating Qilu folk culture terms.

The main pragmatic bottlenecks in English translation include:

- **Mismatch with Historical and Cultural Background:** The translated content does not align with historical and cultural roots. For example, in the explanatory plaque of the Fulaishan Scenic Area, “三教堂” was translated as “the Third Religion Churches,” implying “the third church.” However, the true meaning of “三教堂” is “the temple encompassing three major religions:

Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism.” Such a translation clearly misaligns with cultural and historical roots and can mislead foreign tourists. The correct translation should be “the Temple of the Three Religions,” with an additional explanation of the three major religions for interested visitors to gain further understanding and enhance cultural exchange.

- **Lack of Necessary Explanations:** Failure to provide necessary explanations for Qilu folk culture terms can lead to confusion and misunderstanding among tourists.

2.4 Cultural Bottlenecks in English Translation

At the cultural level, the English translation of tourism culture terms, as a representative means of cross-cultural communication, bridges Chinese and foreign cultures. While promoting cultural exchange, it also fosters cross-cultural communication. However, during the translation of Qilu folk culture terms, the translators’ limited knowledge of the background of these cultural terms often results in translations that fail to convey the true cultural meaning, hindering tourists’ appreciation and understanding of the rich cultural history of Qilu. For instance, translating “龙山” as “Dragon Mountain” in the interpretation of the Longshan cultural site misrepresents the cultural significance. In Chinese traditional culture, “龙” (dragon) symbolizes nobility and authority, whereas in the West, “dragon” represents violence and evil. Therefore, using “dragon” cannot convey the true cultural essence of Longshan to foreign tourists. In this case, using “Longshan” can better help tourists understand the Longshan culture while appropriately addressing cultural dislocation.

3. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PATH OF THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF QILU FOLK TOURISM TERMS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

3.1 Sorting Tourism Materials and Uncovering Folk Connotations

The connotation of folk customs is the foundation for developing folk tourism. Carefully sorting through Qilu folk tourism materials and deeply uncovering the connotations of Qilu folk customs is the primary task in constructing the “Shandong Model” of folk tourism translation. Qilu folk customs are characterized by collectivity, inheritance, and modality, leading to the evolution of many folk cultural landscapes. Therefore, before translating, translators need to thoroughly understand the materials used in Qilu folk tourism, categorizing and summarizing them. From a cultural perspective, Qilu folk customs can be divided into three levels: material folk customs, institutional folk customs,

and spiritual folk customs. Thus, it is especially important to uncover the cultural connotations behind Qilu folk customs based on these categories during translation. The goal is to be authentic and natural, reflecting the true nature of Qilu customs, and laying a solid foundation for the effective English translation of Qilu folk tourism.

3.2 Supplementing Background Introductions and Reconstructing Folk Customs

Qilu folk customs are products of history and the daily lives of the people of Shandong. In the current cross-cultural context, supplementing the background information about the formation of folk stories, characters, and material culture in Qilu folk tourism during English translation can help tourists better understand their developmental context. For instance, using comparative methods that highlight similarities or differences between Qilu folk customs and historical stories familiar to international tourists can make these cultural elements more relatable (Zhu & Xiang, 2018). By making it easier for international tourists to understand the events, characters, and stories involved in folk culture, we can help them grasp the essence of Qilu folk customs and reconstruct their original appearance.

3.3 Using Appropriate Expressions to Enhance Language Quality

The fundamental purpose of translating Qilu folk tourism texts is to introduce as many aspects of Qilu folk tourism attractions as possible and to promote folk culture. When translating these texts, it is important to use appropriate expressions and vocabulary, conveying the content and essence of Qilu folk customs accurately, concisely, and fittingly. This should be done with high-quality language that reflects the emotional tone of the folk culture without resorting to direct, literal translations. By doing so, tourists can not only understand the rich meanings of the customs but also experience an emotional connection.

3.4 Grasping Translation Strategies to Reproduce the Flavor of Folk Customs

Using different translation strategies for the same folk custom can result in different presentation effects, depth of connotation, and completeness of translation. The English translation of Qilu folk culture tourism texts should accurately convey the semantic meaning while preserving the unique characteristics of Qilu, thus achieving the goals of external promotion and cultural exchange. Therefore, it is crucial to understand, learn, study, and ultimately select appropriate translation strategies for the English translation of these texts. Translators should flexibly use strategies such as literal translation, literal translation

with annotations, free translation, phonetic translation, phonetic translation combined with free translation, and creative translation to accurately convey the meanings (Deng & Liao, 2020). This ensures the translation effect, reproduces the flavor of folk customs, and allows the unique charm of Qilu folk culture to be shared with tourists worldwide, helping them understand Qilu folk culture and, by extension, China.

3.5 Balancing Perspectives and Mitigating Cultural Differences

Translators face significant practical challenges, notably the substantial differences in Western and Chinese thinking patterns, values, religious cultures, and historical backgrounds. In the current context of the Belt and Road Initiative, translators must first develop cross-cultural awareness, understanding the connections and distinctions between Chinese and Western cultures, and then master the conversion between Chinese and Western languages.

The translation of folk culture in Qilu folk tourism materials demands that translators not only have a strong foundation in both Chinese and Western languages and cultures, as well as proficient conversion skills, but also possess a keen sensitivity to cultural nuances. Moreover, translators need to deeply consider the reading needs of tourists, balancing the perspectives of both the source and target cultures. Depending on the various tourism texts and content in Qilu folk tourism attractions and website promotions, translators should consider appropriate translation strategies to mitigate cultural differences. This approach highlights the national spirit and cultural depth, ensuring the accurate yet culturally distinctive expression of folk information content.

By effectively using tourism as a channel, this approach ensures that Qilu folk customs are well communicated, telling the Chinese story, and truly bringing Chinese culture to the international stage.

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