



## On the Chinglish Phenomenon in Publicity Material Translation in the Context of Blue Economy

XU Qing<sup>[a],\*</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>College of Foreign Languages, Qingdao University of Science & Technology, Qingdao, China.

\*Corresponding author.

Received 5 May 2016; accepted 11 July 2016

Published online 26 September 2016

### Abstract

With the rapid development of economic globalization and blue economy, the Chinese-English translations of publicity materials are becoming more and more important in all areas of our country. This paper focuses on the study of the phenomenon of Chinglish in translations of publicity materials, it also puts forward practical methods and appropriate strategies to improve the quality of publicity material translation in the context of blue economy.

**Key words:** Publicity materials; Chinglish; Translation strategies; Intercultural communication; Blue Economy

Xu, Q. (2016). On the Chinglish Phenomenon in Publicity Material Translation in the Context of Blue Economy. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 12(9), 27-31. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/8764> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/8764>

### INTRODUCTION

At present, the fast development of cross-cultural communication leads to a growing demand for the translation of publicity materials. Chinese publicity materials are the windows for foreigners to know about our country as well as the publicity of China to the rest of the world. Therefore, the translation of Chinese publicity materials plays a significant role in influencing the image and interests of China and its enterprises.

Translation is generally considered to be a channel of intercultural communication. High-quality translations

play a key role in ensuring good communicative effect. However, despite the great improvements in recent years in Chinese-English (hereafter referred to as “C-E”) translation of publicity materials, many problems concerning the quality and intelligibility of translated texts still exist. One of the most serious problems in translating of economic literature of enterprises is Chinglish.

This paper attempts to discuss culture and language form differences in depth between C-E publicity materials translation, some feasible translation strategies, approaches and principles are also proposed from different aspects in this paper.

### 1. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF TRANSLATION OF PUBLICITY MATERIALS

In recent years, with the deepening of reform and opening-up policy, there is an urgent need for China to communicate with the outside world. C-E translation of publicity materials plays an important role in the process of making China known to the outside world.

#### 1.1 Classification of Publicity Materials

In a broad sense, the translation of publicity materials involves a wide range of fields, as a cross-cultural activity, it includes all Chinese-English translation in the fields of foreign affairs, history, cultural exchanges, tourism, social development, business and trade, science and technology, education, etc. Materials like these provide large amount of information about China for foreigners.

But this paper will mainly discuss the translation of publicity materials in a narrow sense, namely, the translation of economic literature of enterprises such as official documents, economic and trade contracts, scientific and technological exchanges and so on in the context of blue economy. “Blue economy” is described as a marine-based economy by experts, now has been raised

to a high strategic level in our country. According to the statistics, China's marine economy is expected to grow at an annual rate of over 13% in the next five years. As a breakthrough of the traditional ocean economy, China's blue economy focuses on the integration of ocean and land and it emphasizes on the sustainable development and coordination of the ocean's economic, social and ecological aspects. Due to the huge economic and social potential of the seas, blue economy is increasingly considered a good way to boost a country's sustainable development. Accordingly, special attention would be given to the translation of publicity materials in the context of blue economy.

### 1.2 The Definition of Chinglish

According to American language expert Joan Pinkham, Chinglish is defined as hybrid language that is neither English nor Chinese but that might be described as 'English with Chinese characteristics'. Translators have a tendency to express themselves based on Chinese grammar, sentence pattern or thinking mode. It fails to conform to Standard English and English native speakers find it difficult to understand and accept.

Among the major factors negatively affecting the quality of C-E translation of publicity materials, Chinglish undoubtedly could not be neglected. In order to enhance the quality of translations of publicity materials, the use of Chinglish expressions obviously needs to be avoided.

### 1.3 The Major Reasons for Chinglish in Translating of Publicity Materials

In recent years, our country's international communication activities have been expanding. Accordingly, the fast development of cross-cultural communication contributes to a growing need for the translation of publicity materials. It is widely believed that the translation quality of publicity materials has been improving. However, various translation problems still exist in these abundant English versions of foreign publicity materials.

Lots of reasons account for the phenomenon of Chinglish in translations of publicity materials. To begin with, for example, numerous of new words appear in China and it is hard to find the English equivalents in Chinese-English dictionaries. In particular, with the continual development, a lot of different expressions that were unfamiliar to both Chinese and foreign readers come into being, such as some publicity-oriented materials are filled with expressions with Chinese characteristics, especially among government publications. Since patterns and cultures of these two languages vary, for instance, differences can be found in the emphasis on subject or object, process or result, orders of direction and time etc.. So it could be noticed that some texts though grammatically correct, are culturally incorrect, which is particularly true among the use of Chinglish in translations of publicity materials.

What's more, under the influence of Chinese, unacceptable or improbable collocations often appear in C-E translations. Translators are unfamiliar with idiomatic English or English characteristics, since they have few chances to know about. Because translators are more proficient in Chinese than in English, Chinese way of thinking is dominant when translating instead of adopting the structure of English but Chinese. Therefore, Chinese collocations and structures like words, phrases or sentences perhaps are directly translated into English in a wrong way which is not consistent with the original materials. Or this may be referred to as mother tongue's interference, especially when there are unique features of structures and expressions in some materials.

In addition, though personification is often used in Chinese, in many cases it is unacceptable in English. It could easily be noticed that more modifiers are used in Chinese than in English. The expected effect will be undermined due to the overuse of modifiers, so translating them all into English has not always been necessary. For instance, the overuse of the adjectives needs to be noticed when writing English. Expressions like "the true facts" (真正的事实), "active consideration" (积极考虑) are virtually considered Chinglish. If translators tend to translate mechanically without truly understanding the sentences in Chinese, this kind of pragmatic failure is largely due to the translator's neglect of the differences between English and Chinese in language and culture. If translators have gone too far in pursuing faithfulness or equivalence to the original text, eventually it leads to dead translation.

## 2. FACTORS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN AVOIDING CHINGLISH

It is quite often to find out the phenomenon of Chinglish in translations of publicity materials because translators just rigidly stick to the original words, and their translations turn out to be obscure and not consistent with English habits or rules but with Chinese characteristics. As a result, this issue has a negative impact on the quality of translations of publicity materials. To make things worse, our communication with the world and the international status of our country are also seriously affected by Chinglish.

Along with the cultural globalization, translation of publicity materials is much more than transferring the language from Chinese into English. Translators are supposed to adjust and select new combination of vocabulary according to the context. Translators introduce the accurate translations of enterprise publicity materials to the rest of the world, thus people all round the world may have the opportunity to know about our country timely and comprehensively. After all, the purpose of translation of publicity materials lies in promoting

cooperation and mutual understanding between China and the outside world. The followings are the factors to be taken into account in order to avoid Chinglish.

### 2.1 Contents With Chinese Features

In publicity materials, many political, economic and scientific jargons and culture-loaded words can be found. In current years, with the deepening of globalization, many new things with Chinese characteristics have emerged, bringing lots of new terms, it's not that easy for us to find the exact English equivalents in dictionaries. For example: 国有大中型企业 large and medium-sized state-owned enterprises; 小康水平 a well-off standard; 拆迁户 a relocated unit or household, or the typical Chinglish "fist product" (拳头产品), which should be translated as knockout product or core product.

It is known to all that successful translation of publicity materials strengthens the further communication in diverse cultures among different countries. Thus, we need to make the translated English version clearly understood by readers in other countries, and at the same time maintain the Chinese uniqueness. For instance, we need to be proud of our customs and cultural heritages. This will lead to a better understanding of our country including its long history, splendid culture and rapid economic progress, it will be useful to the process of our country's modernization and connection with the outside world.

### 2.2 Keep Pace With the Times

Publicity materials mainly introduce what has happened recently or what is going to happen in China, so it's highly suggested that the translation should be immediate and instantaneous in order to be eye-catching. If translators stick to the original words and structures too much, the phenomena of Chinglish are likely to appear. New words and expressions are on the rise with the development of our times. For example: 耕海牧渔产业化 sea-farming, animal husbandry and fisheries industrialization; 福泽人民 benefit the people; 渔工贸 Fishing industry and trade; 产学研一体化 Enterprises-universities-researches Integration. So it is highly necessary to keep pace with the times, update our specialized knowledge and enhance the overall ability of C-E translation.

### 2.3 From the Perspective of Intercultural Communication

In the translation process, translators have to take their social and cultural backgrounds into consideration, in another word, C-E translation of publicity materials should be target-oriented. The Chinese paragraph contains several four-character compounds, rich in rhetorical forms. In contrast, the English text is full of hyperbole. It is hard for the translated version to produce the same emotional appeal to the foreign audience as well as retain almost all the original contents.

We need to consider the situation of foreign countries such as politics, culture, religion and customs in order to avoid certain confusion, mistakes and misunderstandings and make publicity translation more appropriate and expressive. Such as: 建立以企业为主体、市场为导向、产学研相结合的技术创新体系 establish a market-oriented system for technological innovation, in which enterprises play the leading role and which combines the efforts of enterprises, universities and research institutes; 把“引进来”和“走出去”更好地结合起来 ensure better coordination in pursuing the "bring in" and "go global" strategies. These examples indicate that we should notice the differences so as to ensure the successful translation of publicity materials. Experts also point out that the key to avoiding the use of Chinglish is to get rid of the interference of mother tongue and use the thought and language pattern of the target language.

## 3. STRATEGIES TO REDUCING CHINGLISH IN THE TRANSLATING OF PUBLICITY MATERIALS

It is hard to understand or accept Chinglish for English native speakers. Chinglish may seriously affect the quality of publicity materials when it is used in translating. In order to get rid of such negative influence, experts like Dai Weidong, Chen Xiaowei, Wu Jihong and so on try every means to find solutions to this problem from different angles. Appropriate translation strategies must be applied to the publicity material in Chinese version to avoid arbitrary and disintegrate translation. The followings are some practical translation strategies for reducing and evading Chinglish in translating publicity materials based on translation theories and methods.

### 3.1 Combining Literal Translation With Paraphrase

It is a controversial issue when we talk about the application of literal translation and paraphrase. While doing the publicity materials translation, it is inevitable for translators to use literal translation or paraphrase. Nevertheless, when shall we use literal translation and when should we use paraphrase? It is advisable that translators should use literal translation so as to ensure the accuracy of the original meaning. However, when readers find it hard to understand or accept literal translation, it means not all the phrases or sentences can be translated literally. In such a case, change the word order or use other expressions when necessary, it is wise for translators to get out of the restrictions of the original form and turn to paraphrase for help. For instance: 越是民族的, 越是世界的. The pride of a nation is also the pride of the world. "两个开放" should not be simply translated literally, instead, it should be translated as "an open policy in two aspects, namely to open up both

externally and internally” so as to express the essence of this phrase. 和谐共赢 harmony and all winner; 我们提倡“海纳百川, 有容乃大”, 就是主张吸纳百家优长、兼集八方精义。 We hold that one should be as tolerant as the vast ocean, which admits hundreds of rivers and should draw upon other’s strengths. These guidelines can help us meet the requirement of reducing Chinglish in publicity materials translation.

### 3.2 Addition and Deletion

Some communication failures are caused by inadequate adding of some necessary information to Chinese history, geographical terms, lifestyle, customs and so on. Thus addition is a good solution for this kind of communication failure, translators could add necessary words or explanations to enhance the effect of translation. For example: “三下乡” (文化、科技、卫生) Bringing Culture/Scienceand Technology/Hygienic Health to the Countryside 不搞一刀切 without imposing a single solution; 加强支农、惠农政策 Strengthen the policy of supporting agriculture and benefiting farmers.

Tautology means the use of too many words or repetition to express the same idea. This kind of repetition is obviously acceptable in Chinese. It is used to avoid ambiguity, reinforce meaning, provide balance and symmetry, or just to satisfy the ear. However in western culture, the tautological expression is thought to be illogical, unnecessary repetition. As a result, translators need to be careful for this kind of repetition. Such as 稳定地走上了富裕安康的广阔道路 move steadily toward prosperity and happiness; 使创新智慧竞相迸发、创新人才大量涌现 inspire creativity and bring forth large numbers of innovative personnel; 谱写了中华民族自强不息、顽强奋进新的壮丽 compose a new epic of the Chinese nation’s heroic efforts. The tautological words are left out in the English versions in these examples.

### 3.3 The Application of Domestication and Alienation

The application of domestication and alienation in translating publicity materials is highly essential. In order to meet the demand for foreign language readers and reduce their cultural loss, domestication serves as a good solution to reach a better communication. In contrast, alienation can enrich and develop languages, so it is highly valued for its incomparable advantages in cultural communication.

For the sake of reducing and even evading Chinglish in translations of publicity materials, alienation should be more frequently used at the word level, especially in translating words and expressions with specific Chinese characteristics. By contrast, in order to ensure communication effect at the sentence and text levels, domesticating translation should play a more important role. All in all, the two strategies could be alternately and

flexibly utilized, they are all indispensable in translation of publicity materials into English.

## CONCLUSION

This paper concentrates on the phenomenon of Chinglish in translations of publicity materials in terms of its definition, current situation and its negative influences in the context of blue economy. The above discussion is a summary of the current most common Chinglish phenomenon in translations of publicity materials, though it is far from being comprehensive. The three strategies introduced above are beneficial to improve the quality of translations of publicity materials.

The paper is to help translators to have a clearer cognition of Chinglish and avoid those problems concerning the quality of the translation for publicity materials. A desirable translation is to get a translation come nearer to a higher standard, namely, “faithfulness, smoothness and elegance”, translators are expected to make a theoretical study of the nature and sources of Chinglish. Perfect translation could promote the exchanges and communication between China and other countries and even strengthen the further communication in different cultures among different countries. Hence, we always aim at improving translation performance so as to convey information effectively and facilitate international communication.

## REFERENCES

- Bough, A. C., & Cable, T. (2003). *A history of the language* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Chen, X. W. (2006). *A new practical course in translation*. Beijing: Economic Science Press.
- Crystal, D. (2001). *English as a global language* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dai, W. D. (2010). *A new course book on English-Chinese translation*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Dai, W. D., & He, Z. X. (2002). *A new concise course on linguistic for students of English*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Daniels, B., & Wang, W. X. (2006). *Overcoming Chinglish*. Beijing: Beijing Press.
- Duan, L. C. (2002). An appeal to the concern of external publicity materials among colleagues in translation circles. *Chinese Translators Journal*, 2-10.
- Li, Z. Q. (2006). *The application of domesticating and foreignizing translation strategies in the English translation of external publicity materials*. Shanghai International Studies University.
- Lu, J., & Hou, X. Q. (2001). *English-Chinese translation*. (pp.220-227). Beijing: People’s Education Press.

- Nida, E. A. (2001). *Language, culture and translation*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Peng, J. (2007). The current situation and countermeasures of the translation of foreign publicity materials. *Market Modernization*, (8).
- Pinkham, J. (2000). *The translator's guide to Chinglish*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Radtke, O. L. (2007). *Chinglish: Found in translation*. Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith Publisher.
- Tang, X. L. (2006). *Studies on the C-E translation of foreign publicity materials*. Guangxi University.
- Shi, C. R., & Bai, Y. (2012). A review and prospects of business English translation studies in the ten years of the new century. *Journal of PLA University of Foreign Languages*, (1).
- Wu, J. H. (2014). Retrospect and prospect: Reflections on the present situation of Chinese English study. *Contemporary Foreign Language Studies*, (5).