

## On Translation Strategies of Intercultural Communication of Chinese Culture

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**Supported by** 2018 Gansu Philosophy and Social Sciences Planning Project (甘肃省哲学社会科学规划项目) “Research on the Inheritance and Development Mechanism of Yugur Language and Culture in Gansu Province under the Horizon of the Intercultural Communication of Chinese Culture” (Project No. YB094) and 2018 Research Support Project for Young Teachers of Lanzhou City University “Research on Culture-oriented Translation Teaching Model from the Perspective of the Intercultural Communication of Chinese Culture” (Project No. LZCUQN2018-12).

Received 11 February 2021; accepted 6 April 2021

Published online 26 April 2021

### Abstract

The cross-cultural communication of Chinese culture is a gradual and in-depth process. This paper holds that the translation strategies of Chinese culture overseas are disparate in different phases. In the initial stage, domestication is the preference for translators because it caters to the reading expectation of target readers; during the development period of translation, an integration strategy is taken into account for both cultural communication and readers' expectations; In the booming period of cultural communication, foreignization is the prior choice for transmitting the authentic Chinese culture overseas and allowing target readers appreciate the charm of Chinese culture.

**Key words:** Chinese culture; Cross-cultural communication; Translation strategies

Feng, Z. J. (2021). On Translation Strategies of Intercultural Communication of Chinese Culture. *Canadian Social Science*, 17(2), 68-71. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/12112>  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/12112>

### INTRODUCTION

The intercultural communication of Chinese culture is a cultural construction advocacy put forward by Chinese government at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and it has a positive role in promoting the awakening, rejuvenation and integration of Chinese culture. The communication and dissemination of Chinese culture needs to overcome language and cultural barriers. As a bridge of cross-cultural exchange, translation is an indispensable and significant link in the realization of the intercultural communication of Chinese culture.

### 1. CULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND TRANSLATION

Translation is a communication activity between two different languages and cultures, and effective communication is the key point for translators to consider. There are many elements involved in this process, such as the original author, original work, translator, translation strategies, communication channels, target readers and translation effect. At the intersection of translation studies and communication studies, medio-translatology comes into being. In the light of the 5W transmission model (Lasswell, 1948) of American sociologist Harold Lasswell (1902-1978), the study of medio-translatology deduces a corresponding model: translation subjects (Who), translation channel (In which channel), translation readers (To whom), translation strategy (How), translation content (What) and translation effect (With what effect) (Hu, 2017). Andre Lefévere (1945-1996), a representative of the translation culture school, proposed that cultural and literary translations are influenced by patrons, ideology, and poetic concepts (Lefévere, 2004). Therefore, translators usually choose the original text according to the readers' preferences and select the appropriate strategies to achieve the desired communication goals.

Translation strategy refers to the cultural orientation of translators, including the cultural position, cultural objectives and cultural attitudes embodied in translators' concepts, translation procedures and conversion methods (Jiang, 2018). From the perspective of cultural translation, translation strategies can be roughly divided into domestication and foreignization. These two translation strategies were firstly proposed by Lawrence Venuti (1953 - ). The former means that the readers stay still while the original work and author moves closer to the reader, while the latter refers to that the original author and work stays still, with the target readers getting closer to them (Venuti, 2004). Wang Dongfeng (2002) believes that "if literal translation and free translation are translation strategies at the linguistic level, domestication and foreignization are the strategic continuation of translation to the cultural, poetic and political levels."

The cross-cultural communication of Chinese culture involves cultural elements with typical ethnic and regional features. It not only includes code switching at the linguistic level, but also involves the exchange and interaction between two cultures. Therefore, the translation strategies of Chinese culture need to highlight the translation strategies adopted by translators at the cultural level so as to better achieve the effectiveness of intercultural communication of Chinese culture.

## 2. TRANSLATION STRATEGIES IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION OF CHINESE CULTURE

As a bridge of intercultural communication, translation plays a vital role in the transmission and promotion of Chinese culture in the world. Cultural exchange is the process of translating cultural contents as well as the cognitive acceptance of cultural information by target readers, which involves the dual efforts of Chinese culture "going out" of China and "walking in" the foreign countries. In 1991, Joseph Nye (1937 - ), a professor at Harvard University in the United States, proposed the concept of "soft power", which corresponds to "hard power", such as politics, military, and economics, etc.. Soft power is embodied in the attractiveness of ideology, serving as a significant indicator of international relationships and status. President Xi Jinping (2017) points out in the report of the 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China that "promoting the development of international communication capabilities, telling Chinese stories well, presenting a true, three-dimensional and comprehensive China, and improving the Chinese cultural soft power." It can be seen that the improvement of China's cultural soft power lies not only in the cultural creation of Chinese people but also in its cross-cultural communication.

### 2.1 DOMESTICATION ORIENTATION AT THE INITIAL STAGE OF TRANSLATION

The intercultural communication of Chinese culture has gone through centuries and spread all over the world. Cultural communication does not follow the same pattern from the beginning to the end. It is a process of gradual deepening and development, as is cultural acceptance. During the initial stage of Chinese cultural translation, most of the translators were sinologists. They would either focus on translating Chinese cultural works for their individual preference or seeking spiritual nutrition for their own culture. There are also some overseas Chinese or local Chinese translators in this period like diplomats, explorers, but sinologists take an absolute greater rate. These sinologists are mostly missionaries, such as Robert Morrison (1782–1834), Samuel Wells Williams (1812–1884), William Milne (1785-1822), etc.. Their professional identity determines that they tend to absorb the essence of Chinese culture to serve their country's political, economic and cultural development. During this period, translators tend to adopt domestication translation strategies to cater to the cultural needs of their target context and the aesthetic interests of target readers.

Domestication is a tendency to use the language and thinking patterns of the target readers to tell Chinese stories, publicize Chinese culture, and describe Chinese culture with the same or similar cultural concepts in the target cultural traditions. Since domestication is oriented to the target readers, the source language culture is usually rewritten to some extent, and adjusted accordingly at the language and cultural level based on the target readers' cognition and reading tastes. It is worth mentioning that variation and distortion in the process of cultural dissemination is universal, but it is an effective way for original culture to enter the "other" culture.

### 2.2 Integration Orientation at the Development Stage of Translation

Domestication and foreignization are not binary opposites. They are a unity of contradictions in opposition and complement. Fundamentally, domestication means the adjustment of cultural information in the original text to meet the aesthetic needs of the target readers, while foreignization will ignore the subjective acceptance of target readers so as to preserve the original cultural information (Zhang, 2016). In the development phase of cultural communication, how to better transmit Chinese culture, let Chinese culture "go out" and "walk in" gradually in the target culture, require translators to coordinate domestication and foreignization strategies in an effective way for the sake of effective exchange and interaction of Chinese culture and foreign cultures.

At the initial stage of cultural transmission, the focus is to build recognition of Chinese culture overseas. With the gradual expansion of the overseas reading groups, the

cross-cultural communication of Chinese culture should not just confine to the level of “going out”, but focus more on better representing the authentic features of Chinese culture. Hence, translators need to make decisions and balance between domestication and foreignization in the translation process for the realization of systemic integration of “going out” and “walking in” of Chinese culture in the “other” cultures. Translators preserve the original culture in a comprehensive and balanced manner, meanwhile, they take into account the cultural acceptance of target readers. Compared with the domestication in the previous stage, translators’ orientation in the development period is detached from domestication and foreignization respectively and focused on integration strategy to realize the dual purposes of cross-cultural communication of Chinese culture.

### 2.3 Domestication Orientation in the Booming Stage of Translation

The advocacy of Chinese culture “going out” and “telling Chinese stories” is the component of building cultural power, and it is closely related to the recognition by foreigners and right to speak of China in the international community. The communication and development of Chinese culture is a solid wall that safeguards the independent cultural mission of the Chinese nation and maintains the sense of identity of the Chinese people.

With the development of China’s politics, economy and culture in the world, the cross-cultural communication of Chinese culture in the new era should show fully national self-confidence and the posture of a great country. The inter-cultural communication of Chinese culture in this stage needs to preserve the national, historical and cultural characteristics of Chinese culture. Therefore, foreignization is the prior tendency of translators then. When translators tends to adopt foreignization, he/she intentionally retains the foreignness of the original text and culture, in order to break the various norms of the target cultures (Jiang, 2017), and represent the original language characteristics and cultural expression, because in the booming stage, target readers have a cognitive foundation as well as a reading demand of traditional Chinese culture. It is the translation orientation in the intercultural communication of Chinese culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and it would contribute to showing the authentic Chinese traditional culture to the world, and promoting the exchange and development of different cultures worldwide.

However, traditional Chinese cultures have typical national and regional characteristics, and the conversion of language and cultural symbols would undoubtedly increase the recognition difficulty of target readers. Thus, it is not advisable to overemphasize foreignization in the new era indiscriminately. Translators should avoid causing subjective rejection and cognitive fear of Chinese culture by target readers as well. Translators should take

a comprehensive consideration of the contents of cultural transmission and the substantive disparities of the foreign cultures and Chinese culture.

## 3. CONCLUSIONS

The cross-cultural communication of Chinese culture is a gradual and deepening process. The transmission of Chinese culture can be divided into the initial stage, the development stage and the booming stage. In the initial period, the reading orientation and preferences of overseas readers are the factors taken into account by translators and domestication is a preferred translation strategy for promoting Chinese culture to enter the target readers’ vision. In the development stage, the reading interests of the target readers and the transmission goals of intercultural communication of Chinese culture are the two elements influence translators’ choice of strategy. Translators usually coordinate and naturalize foreignization and domestication strategies to achieve the integrated objective of cultural exchange. In the new era, the intercultural transmission of Chinese culture should establish cultural self-confidence and uplift the Chinese spirit to display the unique Chinese cultural charm on the world stage. Translators’ orientation at this stage is foreignization to fully embody the essence of Chinese culture, and allow foreign readers to appreciate the glory of Chinese culture.

In conclusion, this paper finds that the translator’s tendency to choose translation strategies is closely related to the actual cultural communication context. Translation strategies of translators vary according to different stages of cultural exchange. Thus, in the transmission of Chinese culture, while ensuring the original preservation of Chinese traditional culture, translators need to comprehensively consider the cognitive structure and reading taste of the target readers in order to better realize the effectiveness of Chinese culture’s “going out” of China and “walking into” the world.

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