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On C-E Translation of Chinese Universities Names from the Perspective of Cultural Translation Theory

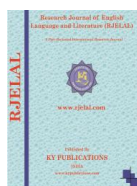
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ABSTRACT

In today's increasingly close international exchanges, the translation of university names is more and more related to the image of a university. Because there is no uniform standard, the current English names of universities are chaotic, which may cause ambiguity. This paper tries to find the problems in the translation of 188 public universities and colleges of technology providing undergraduate education in China. From the perspective of cultural translation theory, this paper will analyze the current translation and give some translation suggestions.

Key words: Chinese Universities Names; Translation; Cultural Translation Theory

1. Introduction

As a cultural carrier, universities are an important body of international communication. The experience of many domestic universities also shows that international cooperation plays an indispensable role in the development of universities. So universities are increasingly involved in international exchange. The English name is a university's "business card" which is related to the first impression of the university to foreign friends. Therefore, it is necessary to research the English names of universities. Based on the investigation of domestic universities' English names, the author finds that there are some problems in the translation. For example, the inaccurate translation may cause misunderstanding and the translation of similar names is not uniform. Although there is no standard for translating university names, it is crucial to regulate the translation and let the English names play a better

role in international communication and cooperation. This paper mainly focuses on 188 public undergraduate universities of technology in China and attempts to give some advice to their translation based on Susan Bassnett's translation studies.

2. Susan Bassnett's translation studies

Susan Bassnett is the key representative of "cultural turn" which leads translation studies' transfer from the linguistic level to the cultural level. Bassnett believes that translation is not just transformation between languages but is the communication of culture within or between cultures. Moreover, the functional equivalence between the source language and the target language is important. It should focus on the function in target language instead of the description of the source language. As for the function of the source text, Bassnett thinks that different texts are endowed with different

functions by culture. In a word, language expresses cultural reality.

In the process of translating universities' names, the ultimate purpose is to make foreign friends know the university better and communication more convenient. This is a kind of cultural communication, which emphasizes the function of translation in the target context. Thus, the translation has to learn from the names of English countries' universities so that foreign readers will have an intuitional understanding of the university when seeing its English name.

3. The translation of universities' names based Susan Bassnett's cultural translation theory

An institute of technology in China is a type of university or college that specializes in engineering, technology, applied science and natural science. Based on the preliminary investigation, there are a lot of problems in the current translation. This paper tries to analyze university names from five aspects and aims to provide some suggestions to the translation based Bassnett's cultural translation theory.

3.1 The translation of “大学” and “学院”

In English, there are mainly three kinds of expressions, “university”, “college” and “institute”, corresponding to the general meaning of “大学” in Chinese. According to WIKIPEDIA, a university refers to an institution of higher education which

awards academic degrees in various academic disciplines. “Universities” typically provide undergraduate education and postgraduate education. They are more reasonable to be used as the counterpart of Chinese “大学”. However, “college” is a constituent part of a collegiate university or an independent institution of higher education focusing on undergraduate education, which should correspond to “学院” that provides undergraduate education in China. An “institute” is an organizational body created for a certain purpose. For example, institute is used in “Institute of technology” that refers to a type of university that specializes in engineering, technology, applied science, and natural sciences. It is worth noting that most universities being called “Institute of technology” have no longer limited to some certain disciplines, but is a comprehensive university.

Based on the above analysis, many schools should use “college” rather than “university”, such as “长沙学院”, “合肥学院”, “浙江万里学院” and “太原学院”. Few technological schools adapt “institute” in their name translation. But it will make foreign readers naturally think that they are as same as Massachusetts Institute of Technology in America or Harbin Institute of Technology in China, so it is inappropriate to translate them as “institute”. For instance, “华北科技学院”, “南京工程学院”, “南昌工程学院” and “湖南工程学院” should be translated as “college”.

University names	Current translation	Suggested translation
河南工程学院	Henan University of Engineering	Henan College of Engineering
福建工程学院	Fujian University of Technology	Fujian College of Engineering
山东交通学院	Shandong JiaoTong University	Shandong Jiaotong College
南阳理工学院	Nanyang Institute of Technology	Nanyang College of Technology
浙江科技学院	Zhejiang University of Science and Technology	Zhejiang College of Science and Technology
东莞理工学院	Dongguan University of Technology	Dongguan College of Technology
荆楚理工学院	Jingchu University of Technology	Jingchu College of Technology
湖北理工学院	Hubei Polytechnic University	Hubei Polytechnic College
长春工程学院	Changchun Institute of Technology	Changchun College of Engineering
河南城建学院	Henan University of Urban Construction	Henan College of Urban Construction
徐州工程学院	Xuzhou University Of Technology	Xuzhou College Of Engineering

江苏理工学院	Jiangsu University of Technology	Jiangsu College of Technology
宁波工程学院	Ningbo University of Technology	Ningbo College of Engineering
黑龙江工业学院	Heilongjiang University Of Technology	Heilongjiang College of Technology
重庆科技学院	Chongqing University of Science and Technology	Chongqing College of Science and Technology

3.2 The translation of “理工”, “科技”, “工业” and “工程”

Technological schools have different names in China, and most of their names have “理工”, “科技”, “工业” and “工程” these words. Because they do have similarities in disciplines setting, it is normal that there are messes in the translation of their names. But it should be distinguished in translation so that foreign readers will be clear about their difference. Among the 188 universities, names with “科技” are all translated into “science and technology” except for “上海科技大学”. What’s more, there is a similar university, Missouri University of Science and Technology, in America. Based the current translated and foreign universities names, it is proper to translate “科技大学” to “university of science and technology”.

In the current 188 universities’ English names, the majority of universities names with “理工” are interpreted into “technology” except that “华东理工大学”, “南京理工大学”, “长沙理工大学”, “昆明理工大学”, “上海理工大学”, “浙江理工大学”, “江

西理工大学”, “安徽理工大学” and “长春理工大” accept “science and technology” in their translation. It is obvious that “理工” cannot be translated into “science and technology”. The word “理工” was originated from the translation of “science” and “technology” in the 1880s. But in universities’ names, “科技” and “理工” are a little different; the latter university is higher in schooling level than the former. In order to distinguish them, “理工” can be translated into “technology”. Most universities names with “工业” are translated into “technology”. At present, there is no obvious difference between the domestic universities of “理工” and “工业”. So “工业” should be “technology” and “天津工业大学” should change to “Tianjin University of Technology”.

Based on the Oxford dictionary, “engineering” refers to the branch of science and technology concerned with the design, building and use of engines, machines, and structures, which is close to the Chinese “工程”. And it can also be separated from others in this way.

University names	Current translation	Suggested translation
华东理工大学	East China University of Science and Technology	East China University of Technology
南京理工大学	Nanjing University of Science and Technology	Nanjing University of Technology
长沙理工大学	Changsha University of Science & Technology	Changsha University of Technology
湖南理工学院	Hunan Institute of Science and Technology	Hunan College of Technology
江西理工大学	Jiangxi University of Science and Technology	Jiangxi University of Technology
浙江理工大学	Zhejiang Sci-Tech University	Zhejiang University of Technology
南京工程学院	Nanjing Institute of Technology	Nanjing College of Engineering
沈阳理工大学	Shenyang Ligong University	Shenyang University of Technology
南昌工程学院	Nanchang Institute of Technology	Nanchang College of Engineering

上海科技大学	Shanghai Tech University	Shanghai University of Science and Technology
黑龙江工程学院	Heilongjiang Institute of Technology	Heilongjiang College of Engineering

3.3 The translation of universities name's structure

Technological schools in China mainly have three ways of naming, "special meaning noun + school category", "location name + school category" and "location name + subject name + school category". The translation of the first one adopts transliteration to show the cultural meaning of the school and make the English name more concise,

such as "Tsinghua University" and "Tongji University". And it can also learn from American Harvard University and Princeton University. However, universities of the second structure in the U.S. and U.K. use "university + of + location" like "the University of Oxford", "the University of Cambridge" and "the University of Manchester". Therefore, "天津大学" should be translated into "the University of Tianjin", and others of this structure are also translated like this.

University names	Current translation	Suggested translation
福州大学	Fuzhou University	the University of Fuzhou
常州大学	Changzhou University	the University of Changzhou
闽江学院	Minjiang University	the College of Minjiang
长沙学院	Changsha University	the College of Changsha
合肥学院	Hefei University	the College of Hefei
新乡学院	Xinxiang University	the College of Xinxiang
许昌学院	Xuchang University	the College of Xuchang
开封大学	Kaifeng University	the University of Kaifeng
邵阳学院	Shaoyang University	the College of Shaoyang
唐山学院	Tangshan College	the College of Tangshan
衢州学院	Quzhou University	the College of Quzhou
太原学院	Taiyuan University	the College of Taiyuan

Most universities of the third one choose "location + university of + subject name" to translate their names. For instance, "Wuhan University of Technology", "Dalian University of Technology", "Hefei University of Technology" and "Chengdu University of Technology". In America, there are "Massachusetts Institute of Technology", "California Institute of the Arts", "California Institute of Technology" and "Texas Agriculture and Mechanic University". So it is better to translate this kind structure into "location + subject name +

university" like "Harbin Engineering University" and "location + university of + subject name" like "Nanjing University of Science and Technology".

The location here refers to "China", "city name" or "position word". In general, both nouns and adjectives can be used, but the word "China" is preferred because "Chinese" can also express the meaning of language. So the structure of "China University" appears in some universities' names, which seems too abnormal. We should flexibly change it to "University of China". And foreign

universities' names also have this "subject name + university + location" structure.

University names	Current translation	Suggested translation
中国科学技术大学	University of Science and Technology of China	Science and Technology University of China
中国石油大学	China University of Petroleum	Petroleum University of China
中国地质大学	China University of Geosciences	Geosciences of China

3.4 The translation of position word in university name

There are 15 universities names with position word among the 188 universities of technology. There are Northeastern University, Northwestern

University, Southwestern University and Southeastern University in American. So "东北大学" can still be translated into "Northeastern University".

University names	Current translation	Suggested translation
西南交通大学	Southeast Jiaotong University	Southeastern Jiaotong University
西南科技大学	Southwest University of Science and Technology	Southwestern University of Science and Technology
东北电力大学	Northeast Electric Power University	Northeastern Electric Power University
东北石油大学	Northeast Petroleum University	Northeastern Petroleum University

Some position words in Chinese university names cannot find the equivalent expression in university names of English speaking countries. These position words are inherently ambiguous such as "华北", "北华" and "北方". Shi Panrong (746) suggests that

"北方" can be translated into "North" or "Northern", "北华" can be translated into "Northern China", and "华北" can still be translated into "North China", which will avoid ambiguity and make the translation more standardized.

University names	Current translation	Suggested translation
东华大学	Donghua University	Northern China University
东华理工大学	East China University of Technology	Eastern China University of Technology
北方工业大学	North China University of Technology	North University of Technology
北华航天工业学院	North China Institute of Aerospace Engineering	Northern China Institute of Aerospace Engineering

3.5 The translation of subjects names

Among the 188 universities of technology, there are a small number of names that are special, because they use the concrete subject name as a part of their names. According to "Colorado School

of Mine" in America, "中国矿业大学" should be translated into "Mine University of China". There is a subject called architecture, so "建筑" can be represented by "architecture" that will be easily

understood by foreign friends. “山东建筑大学”, “北京建筑大学” and “吉林建筑大学” should be “Shandong University of Architecture”, “Beijing University of Architecture” and “Jilin University of Architecture” correspondingly.

“石油” is translated into “petroleum” in “中国石油大学” and “东北石油大学”. In order to unify the similar names and avoid misunderstanding, “西安石油大学” should be “Xi’an University of Petroleum”. There are four universities or colleges names with “电子科技”, but they have different translations. Here “电子科技” can be translated to “electrical engineering” that is an discipline. In this way, foreign people will know the characteristics of the university. “西安电子科技大学”, “桂林电子科技大学”, “杭州电子科技大学” and “北京电子科技学院” will be “Xi’an University of electrical engineering”, “Guilin University of electrical engineering”, “Hangzhou University of electrical engineering” and “Beijing electrical engineering College”.

4. Suggestions on the translation of universities' names

- (1) The translation of university name should follow the principle of functional equivalence and consider English countries' culture

The English translation of university name has the function of publicity and the process of its translation is a kind of cultural communication. Consequently, the translation must take into account the cultural background of English countries and the acceptability of foreign friends. It is better to adopt domestication strategy by searching for the similar university names in English.

- (2) The translation of university name should follow the principle of fidelity and flexibility

Based on the fidelity to the source text, Bassnett emphasizes the fidelity at the cultural level, which means the translation is faithful to the culture of

the target language and audience. Therefore, the translation strategy should be also flexibly changing to achieve this goal.

Bassnett points out that untranslatability exists in any translation. The untranslatability of culture is due to the lack of relevant cultural elements in the target language. Language untranslatability is due to the absence of alternative words or images in the source language system, the lack of relevant lexical expressions in the target language, or syntactic constraints, so that the source language text cannot be properly synonymized. When there is no similar university name in English countries, the translator must translate flexibly to make foreign friends understand it.

5. Conclusion

As the “business card” of a university, the English university name has great cultural value. With the frequent foreign exchanges, the translation of university names should be standardized and unified urgently. When translating, we should refer to the naming methods of similar colleges and universities at home and abroad to express as accurately as possible and avoid ambiguity and misunderstanding.

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