

Review Article

From “Two Mountains” to “Beautiful Villages”: Translation Strategies for Chinese Rural Branding

Abstract:

This paper investigates the cultural adaptation and translation strategies utilized in the Chinese-English (C-E) translation of *Finding the Soul for the Village: A Framework for Branding Rural Development*. Based on Interpretive Theory, as the nature of this qualitative study, the research explores the significance of meaning, cultural self-formation, and rural branding discourse translation across languages and cultures. Describing China's campaign of Rural revitalization and one cannot but ask how many nights a translator would spend tossing, translating when it is so saturated with culture, history and politics. The work also reveals the contradictions in terms of the processes of meaning and the conceptual translation, such as Two Mountains Theory and Beautiful Villages which have the ideological elements. The purpose of this paper is to examine how translators choose to meet the challenge of performing cultural translation while still keeping the message intact. Both foreignization, used when the actual cultural terms are imported together with a gloss, and domestication, where terms are adapted for a particular target culture are evaluated. Due to disclosure of the relevance of Interpretive Theory, it is evident that translation as a process is interpretative exercise and the translator is under the obligation of the fact that he or she is expected not only to translate in the right manner, but also culturally. The outcome that is discussed in the paper reveals that the translator performs the role of a culture broker, whose role is valuable when translating the 'spirit' of the rural development and branding for the readers from other cultural context. Last but not the least, this paper presents its conclusions about the functions of translation to bridge the cultures/ languages and how this process engages with culturally/or policy-important texts such as *Finding The Soul For The Village*.

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study:

The global focus on China's rural revitalization initiatives has sparked significant discourse, particularly regarding the text *Finding the Soul for the Village*: If left to grow organically the branding of these areas is potentially messy, confusing and difficult to reverse, which is why a methodology with clearly defined principles and guidelines for how this can be done is necessary (Visser,2010). This paper seeks to dwell on strategies of how the various villages can be transformed into modern centers of economic potentials and at the same time preserve the cultural significance (Bebbington,2000). It show that Chinese government today has promulgated economic development, environment protection and local culture as the three legs to support the development of china's rural brand strategy, when promoting the attractiveness of rural tourism and developing local identity and pride on the other hand. These kinds of culturally merged texts need attention when translated from Chinese to English because in most of the cases, English does not have the direct translation of the whole cultural and historical significance and socio-political meanings. This is just by example, the word soul, relates to the spirit of country life and relations to other more general processes for example environmentalism trends which call for gentleness when being translated to other referents such as sustainability. Since, rural villages in Chinese society have historically rooted relationship with the society, norms, and polity, any type of translating must acknowledge these historical relations in the community. This means that writers and the translators are under pressure of translating not only the words but also the cultural meaning to help convey the "spirit" of these villages to the audience that doesn't understand Chinese (Sofield & Li,2013). These details prescribe opposing tasks and this study aims at identifying various strategies applied by the translators in developing countermeasures to pass these hurdles with a view

of ensuring that the rich cultural endowment of rural china is taken to every corner of the globe(Ning&Yifeng,2008).

1.2 Research Problem:

1. At the heart of this study is the central question:

How can such translators ensure that this value, which constitutes a cultural and socially political asset of the rural branding approaches, can be properly transferred in C-E translation of Finding the Soul for the Village? This question leads me to a larger question about acculturation in translation since translating as a process is undeniably cultural, translating for development as a process is policy-made and at the same time accultural. Thus the concept of rural revitalization work in China can embrace at once economic work, environmental work, poverty alleviation and efforts to protect and develop the rural cultural assets. There are many overt levels that need to be told directly and accurately; at the same time, there is the need to provide the reader with a way in to the socio-political and socio-cultural membership which is of Chinese origin. This is made even more difficult by the fact that most of the branding strategies adopted by rural brands in China rely on idioms, historical cultural symbols and localized proverbs Many of which English do not have a literal meaning in English. For instance, what may be referred to as 'the Two Mountains Theory' (Two Mountains Concept), which links environmental conservation to improvement of business, is the policy doctrine which was set up in Chinese administration and management. To translate such a concept, it is better to use such translated notions which go beyond simple translations of the various concepts of the given notion, but to translate the elements of the concept taking into account its ideological and philosophic colors, as well as to provide an example of at least one of the aspects of the given concept as it is conceived in China's rural environment. Phrases like "Beautiful Villages' or 'Rural Revitalization', may mean an elaborate

'culture and policy direction not captured under the literal meaning'. For instance, 'beautiful villages include beautiful country side and other broad ideas of government sustainable community development that has to do with beautifying rural villages; standards of living; conservation of historic building; ecotourism development. This is, therefore, the challenge of mobilising these terms but in a context that recognises the making of the terms while at the same time the text is accessible to an international readership. Thus, when it comes to these areas the only option which may be applied is the cultural adaptation. Here, what cultural associations these terms have is data to employ when determining the specifics of strategies that the translator should use to achieve the proper interpretation of the source text by the author. This ranges with respect to whether to "Leave it foreign" which literally means to keep the culture of the communication different from that of target audience; or "Make it domestic" which means putting the information in a form that is understandable by the target culture. All these choices have implications in the perceived idea that the target readers may have in regard to the socio-political and cultural culture of the source material.

2- The objectives of this study are threefold:

1- As a practice, the work will focus on the translation aspects of decision-making linked to the perception of cultural and ideological factors within the translators' socio-political context of the source language, and the concepts that are usually translated into English from the Chinese context, for instance, " Two Mountains Theory" and " Beautiful Villages" (Wang-Kaeding,2021).

2- In order to review the role of the translator, specifically as to whether they foreignize or domesticate the text in order to preserve culture whilst providing easily understandable interculturalization. This includes evaluating under what circumstances and for what reason translators might want to carry forward cultural references or not(Shorter,2006).

3- To evaluate the extent to which the translator acts like a cultural intermediary or a ' cultural interpreter,' as well as a translator who can assist the global readership in understanding the essence of China' s rural redevelopment on the efficiency level. This implicates also assessing how translators mediate between these conflicting logics of cultural meaning in translation while maintaining languages' readability and cohesion(Shieh,2011).

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to the Theory of Translation and Cultural Rehydration

Literature review of translating culturally salvageable texts has been discussed in this chapter, with theories and strategies of the Chinese English (C-E) translation of texts as related to rural revitalization discourse. Through presenting views on Interpretive Theory and such notions as cultural adaptation, the translator as a cultural mediator types in the field suggests the material for this review. It also locates the study in relation to other practices in translation that construe ideologically contentious and culturally contextualization texts(Nishizawa,2005).

2.2 Interpreting theory in Translation

With fulsome reference to Interpretive Theory, also called the Theory of Sense, translation is viewed more as an interpretive and evolving procedure as opposed to a mechanical, word for word conversion. Founded from conference interpretation approach, this theory propose that translators must avoid the word for word translation of the text but instead will attempt to look at meaning and context of the message contained in the text. This approach can be useful when used in translating culturally charged terms as seen in Finding the Soul for the Village where a direct translation of Two Mountains Theory and Beautiful Villages will not capture the spirit behind them, and the socio- political contexts of the two(Gutt, 2014).

2.3 Cultural Identity Formation and the Translator's Function

Another aspect of cultural translation involving the role of a translator in cultural self-formation that deals with the formation of culture and the definition of language and symbols that represent it, has to do with the importance of cultural integrity of the work being translated. In the case of rural branding in China, this concerns not only the informative, economic and environmental meaning of these terms but also the historical and ideological connotation of the concepts, which is incorporated into these words. Translators are, therefore, regarded as culture intermediaries who have the responsibility of maintaining the cultural integrity of the source culture as well as promoting comprehension of that message across culture (Wang, 2021).

2.4 Studies in aspects of Foreignization and Domestication

This section explores two key translation strategies: It may preservation of cultural identity of the source culture also known as foreignization and the altering of the material to match the values of the target culture also known as domestication. Foreignization is utilized when the related cultural essence of names such as 'Two Mountains Theory' should be retained; conversely, if a notion would otherwise be enhanced with localization, domestication is employed. Whether to use one or another strategy it is based on the translator's aims and objectives, audiences, and the degree of cultural equivalent of the concepts being translated (Lilia, 2023).

2.5 Difficulties for the Translation of Texts Important for Policy

Meaning, especially when policy-related or ideologically linked, turns out to be a delicate issue, especially where terms bear cultural or historical associations. This section presents the literature on the translation of such texts, with an emphasis on

the category of translator decision-making: between the tension of literate clarity and accessibility in translated texts, on the one hand, and cultural accuracy, on the other. Best practice and some cautionary tales drawn from other works and real-life contexts are described and shown in comparison between Chinese and English translations of socio-political concepts(Shi,2016).

2.6 Summary and Research Gap

Summarizing the literature review, the current paper demonstrates the general theoretical approaches and specific practical recommendations regarding the cultural translation of ideologically semiotized texts. But remarkably scarce are investigations that analyze the translation of rural revitalization discourse within Chinese context specially in reference to the issue of equity between linguistic and cultural appropriateness for international readership. This study fills this gap by analyzing the specific concerns of Chinese translators in accurately translating information concerning China's rural revitalization efforts without losing cultural and ideological meanings into well-structured English content(Ma,2002).

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research employs a qualitative approach to analyze the translation strategies utilized in the Chinese-to-English (C-E) translation of Finding the Soul for the Village: Branding Rural Development: A Methodology(Xing, 2016). The qualitative descriptive research design enables a detailed approach towards comparing language and culture from where the present text base derives its major concepts on culture and branding vocabularies. Thus the identification of meaning with translation suggests a definition of the task that is most appropriate for translation studies since it offers an approach to which such issues as contextual pointers, or interpretive paradigms

which are among the most pertinent indices when handling texts steeped in culture(Tietze, 2021).

The application of qualitative approaches provides chief benefit when there is opportunity to contemplate multiple levels of signification. Descriptive design enables an ID of specific documented strategies by illustrating the areas in which observed strategies will be required to alleviate the reported linguistic and cultural differences by the translators. This makes it possible for the researchers to capture fine grained details concerning language usage and cultural adaptation decisions which depend on the type of text, target reader ship as well as the type of translation to be conducted. Closely, because Finding the Soul for the Village discusses diverse cultural narratives and policies in the destination, such a qualitative design lets understanding the alterations made into the adaption of this work for the read in English but for the meaning to remain invariable(Daskon,2010).

In this lack this study posits its focus on making sense of branding terms and discourses of the rural which are the over-arching themes of Finding the Soul for the Village. It is, therefore, clear that branding terminology should not be translated directly as it is orientated toward the semantic analyses and cultural meanings of branding activities. That is why using a qualitative study is useful to show the process in which the translators maneuver around cultures and terms, trying to attract the global audience, but at the same time to remain culturally relevant(Burton,2008).

3.2 Data Collection Methods

Textual data were collected from the book Finding the Soul for the Village which is originally written in Chinese but is also available in English. Language selection allows for a better practical analytical consideration of communication making use of textual analysis aimed at identifying instances of cultural adaptation and branding. This procedure was based on a detailed comparative analysis of the source and target texts focusing on the sections that seem to raise cultural or terminological

issues. When examining particular culture-bound references, phrasings like idiomatic expressions, branding terms, and policy language, it becomes possible to determine how translators maintained formal and religious text's textual accuracy for English readers(Hill,2013).

The reasons for the choice of textual analysis are explained by the fact that this method allows identifying how the meaning in translation is translated, as well as if it is translated with faithful correspondence or undergoes various transformations. This method reveals cultural phrases and sayings that have to be delicately translated in a Translation and Interpretation process. Also, general translation of branding terminology towards the rural development was examined since these terms have hidden contexts that complicated the translation process. For example, slogans such as " Beautiful Countryside" which conveys a set of ideological messages must undergo special translation in order to have the desired effect. This analysis also showed how translators handled bodies of text that contained culture-dependent idioms and expressions, thus establishing how and when a direct translation, an approximation of culturally unique language, or supplementary clarification was made(Kembaren, 2019).

3.3 Data Analysis

Interpretive Perspective Theory informed the approach to data analysis with a particular attention to the process of sense making in a translation context. This theory concludes that instead of words, what translators do is retranslating the meaning into another context helping in understanding in another culture. This study thus discusses the cultural issues and particular approaches to the translation of meaning for Finding the Soul for the Village. The activities for analysis involved sub categorization as well as an evaluation of the observed translation strategies that may have been employed in order to define domestication, foreignization, and hybrid strategies, which are all common approaches to dealing with cultural differences. Domestication brings the text closer to the target reader while

impregnating it with the source culture, foreignization does the opposite. These may be adopted in a mixed fashion with the best proportion of simplicity and cultural relevance being incorporated (AlGhamdi, 2016).

The evaluation criteria were as follows: their capabilities in terms of the degree of maintaining the intended meaning and cultural references in the translation text. Examples of the scenarios where translations were misleading or distorted culture were identified so that some strategies could be examined more closely for their weaknesses. For instance, literal translation of a proverb that may be quite (macro)popular within a certain culture may not be well understood by audience from the other culture (Molulela, 2021).

In conclusion, this work examines the translation consequences in the area of cultural diplomacy and intercultural communication. Translating *Finding the Soul for the Village* helps people around the world understand China's developing countryside, so the work is crucial for cultural exchange. This research aligns the analysis with Interpretive Theory and offers a clear exposition on how meaning-making has a social process and involves both linguistic and cultural interfaces (Volland, 2008).

Cultural Adaptation in the Translation of Branding Terms

4.1 Translating "美丽乡村" (Beautiful Villages)

The phrase "美丽乡村" (Beautiful Villages) is at the heart of rural identity renewal in China, which reconciles development with the enhancement, conservation, and promotion of cultural value. This term speaks to the desire to have eye pleasing villages which will be assessable for tourists while at the same time promoting unity of the residents and pride in what they see around them. Translating the program "Beautiful Villages" is the process which requires more than the mere interpretation of the words as well as the definition of the targets and goals that

drive the culture. The translator has to grasp the duality of the term and make those nuances, which as a columnist are associated with community beautification and the ecological values amounts to a global reader (Zhaxi,2020).

In order to deliver these layers of meaning translators may go for culturalizations which stress the initiative of the countryside in terms of beautification. This way is more natural for people who did not have to face or consider socio-cultural significance of the term in China anymore, thus making it more desirable for an international audience. Research shows that great concern must be observed when translating branding terms in a way that balance is achieved between the source culture and target culture (Klein,2006).

4.2 Adapting "两山理念" (Two Mountains Theory)

This Three Magic Mountains Theory of Xi Jinping proposed that the protection of environment germane to wealth creation. This idea encapsulates a vast integral paradigm concerned with economic development in the Chinese context while encompassing environmental conservation. When translating ' Two Mountains Theory,' the translator needs to convey its ideological significance while not overcomplicating a text for readers who might have no idea what that' s like, in China (Liu,2019).

To translate this concept this task calls for an anticipation strategy that conveys the density of this concept without reducing it to mere literal sense. One of the strategies is to explain further, and this direction is highly possible to help the non-Chinese speaking readers appreciate the content fully. Translators who reveal the ideological nature of the term will open up a more nuanced understanding of relationships between preservation of the environment and development of the economy which is essential to the overall narrative of rural development (Han, 2018).

4.3 Challenges in Translating Policy Language

There is also extra difficulty in translating policy terms in dealing with rural revitalization measures including the ‘千万工程’ (Millions Project). Under this term one can describe large scale government initiated exercises when goals is improvement of rural infrastructure as well as living conditions. Such translation of course requires a certain degree of cultural adaptation to make certain that the respective contextual nuances of these policies are fully appreciated by the English only audience (Gilman, 2013).

Some of the most common practices, used by translators are those of domestication, and consist of translating a certain term or phrase to a less complicated, but at the same time keeping the policy as authoritative and important as it was intended. This balance is important to get rid of the use of formal translation which may shift the targeted audience’s attitude towards the policy in the wrong direction. Further, it helps the international consumers grasp the Chinese government’s support to rural improvement as such an establishment (Yang, 2023).

Chapter 5: Translation Strategies in Rural Branding

5.1 Foreignization and Domestication

The author of this paper contributes to the literature of translating branding terms by identifying that translators use both foreignization and domestication regularly in equal intervals. In foreignization, the Chinese terms are kept intact but additional clarification is given, on the other hand where domestication is a complete integration of the Chinese terms into the branding hierarchy of the Western world. For instance, the term “乡村振兴” (Rural Revitalization) has been gently reinterpreted and fitted into global sustainable processes making it easy for the agenda to gain adoption globally (Xue, 2015).

The use of these strategies evidences that cultural relevance and clarity are always to be balanced. Although foreignization retains the cultural value inherent in the terms, domestication can improve perceived relevance of the terms to a wider

audience. Such interchange helps translators to balance a number of challenges associated with cross-cultural communication of rural branding with appropriateness in conveying the purpose and intentions of such branding exercises(Lilia,2010).

5.2 Maintaining the "Soul" of Rural Branding

One of the major concerns for the translator it is to preserve the spirit of rural branding interventions so that the soul of each village is not lost in the process of translation. To do so, translators use methods that focus on stressing out certain local histories, peculiarities of the environment or cultural practices within each of the communities(Oakes,2013).

In this way, translators can better capture what really constitutes rural branding due to the highlighted specific features. This in turn increases cultural flavor in translation in addition to building a better relation between the reader and the content in question. The target readers from other countries can immerse themselves in the special context of rural China, thereby playing a positive role in enhancing interaction and capitalization on the reactivation of various measures in rural China(Wu, 2018).

Role of the Translator as a Cultural Mediator

6.1 Bridging Cultural Gaps

Translators are performing an important function of cultural interlocutors, translating the Chinese policies in rural development into the global language. In this way, they set up an effective framing of the branding of rural revitalization projects for the domestic and international readership. But this mediation also entails not

only words, inter alia, in addition to perceiving the differences, but also cultural references and meanings(Hung, 2005).

When positioning branding practices in line with the concept of sustainable development and environmental conservation, the translators can help to encourage the development of more conscious discourses of rural renewal. Such a process explains the role of a translator as a mediator of intercultural perception and appreciation of the relatively often encountered cultural differences (Hoff, 1998).

6.2 Balancing Accuracy and Adaptation

This chapter provides additional information on the topic which has been discussed throughout the work: how translators manage the tension between source text and culture. By this we do not mean that some of the terms may be translated word by word to maintain the political or historical value of these terms whereas others may need to be translated to be made more acceptable and easily understood by audiences in other countries(Venuti,2017).

For example, sometimes, due to translation of certain terms connected with governance and community development, it will not be enough just to provide the direct equivalent, because the perception of these notions can be different in different cultures. This balance is important under the strategy of analyzing the effectiveness of the messages being passed in translating and at the same time, make sure that the source culture is notie.compareTo competitors corrupted in anyway (Schaffer,2000).

Conclusion

7.1 Summary of Findings

In doing so, the study draws attention to the need to apply cultural translation when translating Chinese to English, particularly when it comes to a rural branding and development discourse. This paper shows that the activity of a translator acting as a cultural intermediary is critical in

transferring both the political and cultural meanings from the original text to the target language. By finding the direct equivalent for the source text and its meanings translators are able to convey thoughts and emotions and remain as culturally sensitive as possible(Wu, 2022).

7.2 Implications for Future Research

Subsequent studies may focus on the effectiveness of the translated strategies on the global reception to Chinese rural revival project. Vandebroek, Pascucci, and Bosia argue that comparing how branding processes for rural development are operationalized in different languages and cultures helps to identify how they are perceived internationally. Further, research might center on how digital media can help construct cultural bridges on issues surrounding rural branding(Zhang, 2024).

7.3 Final Thoughts

Culturally bound materials and finding the soul for the village especially may call for much more than a word-to-word translation. The fans demand a highly developed cultural literacy and keen social awareness of the general landscape in which the source is set. This is more than simple translation, interlinear where one language simply matches the words of the other: it is a reproduction of the text where the itinerary of the reception, with its cultural and ideological context as an undercurrenting, can be discerned. Regarding the field of China's rural revitalization, such as English terms "Two Mountains Theory" and "Beautiful Villages" refer to the additional meanings related to the environmental policy and vision for the economic growth of China, however, the aesthetical and historical importance of Chinese villages should also be included with these terms. In other words, where these ideas are being used, the translator can only play the role of a 'cultural mediator', who doesn't allow these ideas to be entirely 'lost in translation.' Through the proper retranslation of these terms, translators fill the gap between the local culture that values those terms and a world outside the country who also is in a position to appreciate the same(Palsson, 1994).

This is not a mere desire for another accurate and easy-to-read translation of major aspects of the China's rurality and rural revitalization drive; it is the aim for providing for an English-speaking audience a tangible sense of the 'spirit' of the latter's undertaking, namely, sustainability of agriculture and rural communities, as well as raising the communities' consciousness and promoting such spirit. In doing so it both contributes to international debates on such topics as sustainable development, rural development, and environmental protection, and adheres to Chinese value orientation while contributing to the protection of the specific character of Chinese rural policy system. Thus, the function of translator is switched to cultural interpreting. They need to solve the problem of foreignization which preserves cultural differences, especially actual idiomatic expressions, with the problem of domestication which makes concepts familiar to the global audience. This bi-fold approach allows the reader, irrespective of his or her cultural orientation, to receive clear and direct pragmatic visions and missions of rural renewal processes (Pan, 2016).

In this case, culturally appropriate methods of translating techniques make the book, *Finding the Soul for the Village*, more than a written piece but a tool for sharing cultural experiences. Readers benefit from understanding the features of culture and policy and envisioning how the rural areas of China might develop thanks to the book that will potentially contribute to a global discussion about sustainable development and how it might be seen from a culturally sensitive standpoint (Goldbard, 2006).

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