The Changes in the Name of Variety Shows that Introduced into China from South Korea: From a Linguistics Perspective

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Abstract—By comparing the names of South Korean programs introduced in mainland China from 2015 to 2020 on the four mainstream platforms with the original programs, the linguistic characteristics are summarized in the article: the phonetics tend to be four-syllables and five-syllables; The range of vocabulary is relatively small; the proportion of Chinese programs using sentences as names is higher, but the two countries’ programs still tend to use words as program names.

Index Terms—Chinese and South Korean variety show, variety shows’ name.

I. INTRODUCTION

The rise of online variety shows in China has made variety shows become one of the Consumption landscapes that have attracted much attention, as well as an important way for people to entertain. As a cultural industry, variety shows ushered in a period of rapid development after the rapid development of the Internet in 2015. The name of the variety show serves as the first window for the audience to understand and recognize the program and an important part of memorizing the program. The title of the program shows the main content of the program to a certain extent and is also an important factor affecting the audience's attention. It is said that the name of a variety show is the soul of the show. From another perspective, the name of the variety shows is also a popular cultural language. The introduced programs can reflect the tolerance of foreign culture in popular culture and the characteristics of popular culture in mainland China from the perspective of linguistics. Some language skills can make the program closer to the culture of Mainland China.

The article focuses on the “remake” of the South Korean Variety Shows by mainland producers. It includes the remake of the original Korean programs with copyright and programs have been accused of copying South Korean shows in the program structure and other aspects.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The research on the names of variety shows has increased since 2005. The linguistic interpretation mainly focuses on the semantics and language structure of the name of the variety show, and the non-linguistic interpretation mainly focuses on the propagation effect of the name of the show and copyright issues. [1] For the introduction of foreign programs, the language translation is mainly studied, such as Xu Qunping’s “The Application of Skopos Theory in the Translation of TV Variety Show Titles”. [2]

There are still some imperfections in the current research on the names of variety shows: the first is the neglect of online variety shows. After 2010 fast development of the Internet, mainland China's variety shows no longer dominated by TV stations Online variety shows produced by Internet broadcasting platforms such as Tencent accounted for nearly 40% of the variety show share in 2019.

The second is the neglect of the research on the names of introduced programs. After 2010, Many foreign programs were introduced into mainland China and many different programs were formed based on the same foreign program. The language and culture, language and society changes reflected in the similarities and differences of the programs are also lacking in research. The research scope of variety shows mainly focus on reality shows that have gradually received attention and pattern of traditional TV stations [3], while online variety shows on the network platform attract relatively less attention. The research on foreign programs is mainly about program translation, and there is less research on domestic variety shows with imported models, which also leaves room for research on the language characteristics and causes of variety shows.

III. CURRENT SITUATION OF THE INTRODUCTION OF SOUTH KOREAN VARIETY SHOWS

After 2015, the Internet began to become an important medium for watching programs, and a large number of programs provided by TV stations were moved to online platforms. In order to better analyze the current status of Chinese TV variety shows, this article mainly collected data from four mainstream online platforms according to the market share in the late five years. They are Youku, iQiyi, Tencent, and Mango TV. Based on the variety shows of the past five years collected on four online platforms, a list of variety shows that have South Korean program copyrights or suspected of copyright issues from 2015 to 2020 was compiled. Any variety show that was broadcast after 2015, are included; derivative programs of individual programs are not included; all programs are subject to the official website name. According to the above statistics, a total of 105 Chinese programs and 72 South Korean programs are included. The second is the neglect of the research on the names of introduced programs. After 2010, Many foreign programs were introduced into mainland China and many different programs were formed based on the same foreign program. The language and culture, language and society changes reflected in the similarities and differences of the programs are also lacking in research. The research scope of variety shows mainly focus on reality shows that have gradually received attention and pattern of traditional TV stations [3], while online variety shows on the network platform attract relatively less attention. The research on foreign programs is mainly about program translation, and there is less research on domestic variety shows with imported models, which also leaves room for research on the language characteristics and causes of variety shows.
From the aspect of translation, the variety shows can be divided into four parts: literal translation; amplification; semantic translation; free translation. According to Table I, almost half of them chose to use free translation, while fewer programs used literal translation.

IV. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LANGUAGE FEATURES OF CHINESE AND SOUTH KOREAN PROGRAM NAME

The characteristics of language ontology can be observed in three aspects: phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar.

A. Investigation of Phonetic Features

Variety show name, as an audio-visual language often used in the show and publicity, is important to be catchy. First, the article focuses on the characteristics of Chinese and South Korean program names from the number of syllables and rhythmic matching of program names [4].

It can be seen that the original South Korean programs of South Korean programs introduced by China tend to have four syllables and five syllables, which account for 61.1% and 75%. The syllable tendency of Chinese programs introducing South Korean variety shows is consistent with the trend of the entire Chinese variety show market. Compared with South Korean original programs, Chinese programs tend to use five-syllable names, and this is an upward trend in China. Except for the English transliteration of South Korean program names, South Korean programs still have more four-syllable and five-syllable program names. In the use of English as the program name, the proportion of two English words as the program name is nearly 100%.

The name of variety shows pursues conciseness, which caters to the high-efficiency society in the fast-paced life. Secondly, the four-character or four-character pattern has a stable and solemn color in Chinese because of the neat tone and rhythm. Four syllables in Chinese mostly appear in the format of nouns and nouns which are both two-syllable words, having obvious symmetry. Some four-syllable names in South Korea are English, while other four-syllable words are often a combination of Chinese words, which also has the geometric shape and sequence. The five-character format are mostly in the structure of “2+1+2”, “2+3” or “3+2”. The vowel at the end of the prosodic sentence is short, but the silent pause is longer or the rhyming phrase is long since the final vowel is stretched with a long silent pause after that. Both have obvious pauses, making the five-syllable names resemble four-syllable words in terms of pauses [5].

B. Investigation of the Use of the Word

Words are another important element of language and the most important grammatical unit. The use of vocabulary can reflect the changes in popular culture.

From the perspective of the choice of words, loan words are often used in the names of South Korean programs, which is consistent with the current situation of frequent use of loan words in South Korea. In addition, foreign words are mainly English. Among the 72 South Korean programs, 25 programs are using foreign words, close to 35%, but only 4 Chinese programs, accounting for 3.7% of all programs. This proportion reflects the difference between China and South Korea in accepting foreign words.

Another feature is the contrast between acronyms in South Korean and newly created words in Chinese: Chinese newly created words mainly replace existing vocabulary because of the need for word meaning [6]. For example, “一唱到底” replace “唱 (being consistent)” in the original phrase “一唱到底”, with “唱(singing)”. In some singer competitions, to
distinguish winners from other singers, the core element “歌 (song/singing)” is remained and added with “将 (the General)” or “王(king)”. South Korean new coinage is made through two methods: abbreviating original phrases or sentences or combining South Korean and English. The most typical one is Running Man (런닝맨). First, the verb, run, is changed to a gerund and combined with a noun. Then the word is transliterated into South Korean.

In addition, the person’s name and occupation are also used in the title, such as 가수, “明星” and “偶像”. However, it can be seen that there are very few words in the names of variety shows for both countries, such as place, time and etc. Compared with the program names in the overall variety show market, the vocabulary is not abundant and various.

C. Investigation of Grammar

Grammar can be divided into four levels: morphemes, words, phrases, and sentences. Although written language needs punctuation to distinguish it from everyday language, it is also included in the sentence part for part of the program name already has a clear tone.

| TABLE IV: THE COMPARISON OF GRAMMAR |
|-------------------------------------|
| South Korea | example | China | example |
| word | 7 9.7% | 한됨 | 5 4.6% | 中餐厅 |
| phrase | 57 79% | 꽃보다 청춘 | 76 70% | 花样青春 |
| sentence | 8 11.1% | 나 혼자 산다 | 26 24.2% | 咱们穿越吧 |

It can be seen from Table IV that when China introduced South Korean programs, the rate of using sentences as names was twice that of South Korean programs themselves, and most of them were imperative sentences ending with the word “吧”, while South Korea mainly used declarative sentences. Compared with other Chinese variety shows, other original variety shows, and derivative shows often use imperative sentences ending with “吧” as their title.

Another feature is the special grammatical structure. Most South Korean variety shows with titles as a word is either noun phrase or verb phrase; Chinese programs also conform to the existing structure: subject-predicate structure, verb-object structure, supplementary structure, partial positive structure, or joint structure. However, a large number of “noun + noun” structures appear in the names of programs in China and South Korea, such as “무한도전”, “明星大侦探” and so on. Part of the adjectives that come from Chinese in the South Korean directly retain the actual meaning of the words in the Chinese part, and “하다” is omitted. This greatly removes redundant information, which is in line with the pursuit of simplicity in variety show titles. The name of South Korean programs as sentence all conform to the normal sentence structure. Part of the Chinese programs have an inversion of subject and verb, such as “奔跑吧兄弟”.

V. THE LANGUAGE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHINESE AND SOUTH KOREAN PROGRAMS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Chinese online variety shows witnessed rapid development, and it is not uncommon for Chinese variety shows to learn from South Korean programs after they were introduced in 2013. Most of the time, programs that purchase copyrights will literally translate the original South Korean program names into Chinese, such as “꽃보다 누나” and “花样姐姐”, “전복 사나이” and “真正男子汉”. For programs that have not purchased copyright or reproduced versions of programs that have purchased copyright, the main elements of the program will be directly placed in the name of the program, such as “梦想的声音”, “我就要这样生活” and so on.

One of the important factors is to highlight the content of the program is celebrity. The setting of the program not only did not narrow the distance between the program and the audience but increased the distance between the star and the general audience. The program was constructed from the perspective of observation. [7] It can also be seen from the content settings of the programs that in the early stage of the investigation period, more competitive game programs were introduced now. However, in the introduction of programs in the last two years, compared to the variety show that aims to enjoy life, observation programs like “我家那小子” has attracted more attention, especially when it comes to topics related to love and living alone.

Another important feature is that the name of the program reflects that the target audience of the program introduced in China is younger than before. Observation programs emphasize personal will, love, and living alone, which are more in line with the loneliness of urban young people under the current atomization trend in society. In the content of the introduced program, the core aspect is not to highlight unity and friendship but to enjoy life alone. However, the main theme of the program still has to highlight celebrities, the content is more inclined to enjoy life rather than ordinary life troubles. One example is the ever-changing “花样姐姐” series, from “花样姐姐” to “旅游的花样”. They all have the same processing from “꽃보다누나”, but the content has changed over time. Another possible reason is that the National Radio and Television Administration has control over the content of variety shows. Because of the emphasis on the combination of celebrities and ordinary people in the program, programs have to shift the perspective from the interaction between celebrities to ordinary people, emphasizing that celebrity guests and ordinary humans are the young generation, and fully emphasizing their social practice. For example, For South Korean programs, the only program involving the word “청춘” is “꽃보다 청춘”, which is a backpack travel program, but there are 5 programs in China, including talent show and hotel management programs. After the introduction of many programs including “Good People”, “김병만의 정글의 범죄” to China, their original competitive and task-based performances have been transformed into a portrait of youth, “young people’s life choices and ideal practice”.

VI. CONCLUSION

This article sorts out the programs on the four major online platforms from 2015 to 2020 and compares the names of Chinese variety shows introduced from and original
programs. The program names in the two languages have the same tendency on syllables and rhythms; the choice of vocabulary is not relatively abundant for Chinese variety shows; the proportion of Chinese programs using sentences as names is higher, but the two countries still tend to use words as program names. The name of the program can be said to be a language art, reflecting the inclination of the country’s popular culture and today’s social outlook. From a linguistics perspective, a better understanding of the difference between languages explores the localization of introduced programs.

### APPENDIX

| number | name of Korean variety show | Korean pronunciation in romanization | English name | name of Chinese variety show |
|--------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| 1      | Running Man                 | running maen                        | Running Man | なびく花 \*brilliant flower |
| 2      | 별 편성                       | byeotbyeong                        | lovely star | 你好 |
| Season | View |
|--------|------|
| 77     | appa odiga |
| 78     | sahimbaneun nanjadeul |
| 79     | na honja sanda |
| 80     | biginogein |
| 81     | singgeurwaipeu |
| 82     | beurekoseu |
| 83     | riteul poreseuteu |
| 84     | chulbalieurimint |
| 85     | dongsangimong |
| 86     | ripsseutikpeurinseu |
| 88     | yondae seuta sonsugwon daechwe |
| 89     | jumuneul ijeun eumssikjom |
| 90     | do jinoiseu geime bopchik |
| 91     | kwindom |
| 92     | jipssabulche |
| 93     | syomidomoni |
| 94     | produdyuseu baegil il i/ sam/ ekseu |
| 95     | produce 101 season 1/2/3X |
| 96     | music bank |
| 98     | myuikkkppangkeu/in gigayo eumakjungsim |
| 99     | Music Center |
| 100    | Show Music Center |
| 101    | Show Champion |
| 102    | THE SHOW |
| 103    | SBS MTV |
| 104    | THE SHOW |
| 105    | Mnet M! Countindow |

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

**AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

Hu Xinyue contributed to all parts of the paper.

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