Research on Chinese-English Translation of Internet Buzzwords from the Perspective of Cultural Context—Examples Chosen from Internet Buzzwords of 2008–2018

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Abstract. Language is the carrier of culture, and culture is the spiritual connotation of language. After the millennium, online life is changing with each passing day, and the development of vocabulary is in the midst of a big bang. The emergence of a large number of internet buzzwords has brought about a new transformation of the means of communication. The era has constantly put forward new requirements for internet buzzwords. With the continuous enhancement of China's comprehensive national strength and the gradual rise of Chinese culture, cultural output, cultural self-confidence and cultural consciousness are becoming increasingly important. Strengthening the research on Chinese network culture and translating China's internet buzzwords accurately and comprehensively have become an urgent problem to be solved. This paper takes the representative internet buzzwords of 2008–2018 as a sample case to study Chinese internet buzzwords from the perspective of cultural context, striving to translate the internet buzzwords in the most appropriate way and convey the Chinese culture behind it.

1 Introduction

In the era of rapid development of global information technology, the explosive popularity of internet buzzwords has brought a variety of online popular words, which have quietly developed and expanded into every corner of modern society. China is swiftly moving forward in the wave of the world, bearing the mission and gaining the momentum of progress, countries all over the world need to understand China, and China needs to make its own voice. Understanding is always based on understanding, language is the carrier of culture, and internet buzzwords are a special embodiment of modern Chinese culture. The exchange is inseparable from the cultural context. The collision and transmission of language is the intersection of civilization and the resonance of culture. The article will use the Chinese-English translation of internet popular vocabulary from 2008 to 2018 as a corpus and explore the means and meanings of internet buzzwords translation from the perspective of cultural context.

2 Literature Review

The research on internet buzzwords in foreign countries started early. In 1997, the Network and Language Seminar hosted by the World Center for Language Studies and Data Center of the University of Hartford in the United States and the first International Conference on Network Language Research in 2003 marked the beginning of the research in the world linguistic community. At present, a wide range of research on network language and internet buzzwords have been conducted in foreign countries, including language element variation of network language, the reasons for network language and network symbol generation, network language and cultural relations.
Domestic research on network language and internet buzzwords started late, beginning in the late 1990s. From the initial collection and conceptual interpretation of online words to the study of network vocabulary from the perspective of linguistics, the research has generated fruitful achievements. For example, Chen Jianwei from Guangxi University analyzed various characteristics of internet buzzwords from the perspective of linguistics in his master's thesis Internet Buzzword Research in 2008[1]. Since then, the study of internet buzzwords has gradually entered the view of researchers in the field of Journalism, Sociology, Cultural Studies, Pedagogy, Psychology and other social disciplines, presenting a multi-dimensional, multi-view and multidisciplinary research situation.

With the popularity of the internet, the study of internet buzzwords has presented a situation of “a hundred flowers blossom”. However, based on the background of cross-cultural communication, there is relatively little research on Chinese culture contained in internet buzzwords. Therefore, it is urgent to translate China's internet buzzwords, so that they can vividly convey the Chinese culture behind the internet buzzwords on the basis of authenticity, and let Chinese culture go to the world through the bridge of cross-cultural communication.

Translation research on internet buzzwords conducted by domestic scholars lack high-quality results. Most of the translations only convey the literal meaning of the words, but ignore how to translate the vocabulary to the greatest extent that allows foreign friends to understand its cultural connotation and deep Chinese culture behind it. For example, the online translation of the internet buzzword "Koi" in 2018 is “Lucky carp”, which does not fully convey to foreigners the practical meaning that koi represents. If translated as “someone who is extremely lucky”, it will give foreigners a better understanding of the meaning of the word koi used in this context. But there is also a need for further explanation to make the culture behind the word "koi" appear. For example, in Chinese ancient time, "The carp has leaped through the dragon's gate" is used to describe somebody who becomes prosperous and successful in his life career. Later, carp was compared to the symbol of luck and felicity. And now, This word "Koi" is used to compliment those people who always have a lot of luck, especially possessing good fortune in the small probabilistic things. In this way, the external culture of the word "Koi" and the inner Chinese "Koi" culture can be seen on paper. However, there still lacks such a way to accurately and comprehensively translate internet buzzwords in current academic community and the Internet.

Based on the development of internet buzzwords and the necessity of disseminating Chinese culture, it is of great significance to study the translation of Chinese internet buzzwords from the perspective of cross-cultural communication.

3 Research Theory

In the context of the era of globalization, the relationship between countries in the world is inseparable, and cross-cultural communication has become the main theme of the times. Susan Bassnett puts forward that "The unit of translation should be culture rather than just words, sentences, paragraphs or discourses"[2]. Cross-cultural translation is not only helpful for people to spread the culture of their own country or their own nation, but also to receive the cultural characteristics of other ethnic groups, so as to promote multicultural exchange. In cross-cultural translation, the translator should consider how to highlight the cultural connotation behind the translated text on the premise of making the readers understand it. This is Eugene Nida's idea of "Dynamic equivalence" translation[3]. "Dynamic equivalence" emphasizes that different target language readers have the same reading effect as source language readers. Nida also puts forward the concept of "Functional equivalence", which aims to achieve formal equivalence as far as possible on the basis of the consistency between the original text and the content of the translated information [4].

It is true that there is not only communication but also conflict behind the transformation of languages in the process of cross-cultural translation. How to resolve the conflict and realize harmonious communication have become an important part of communication between different
cultures. In 1995, Laurence Venuti put forward the translation strategies of "Domestication" and "Foreignization" in his book *The Translator's Invisibility*[5]. "Domestication" refers to taking the linguistic habits and cultural traditions of the target language as the basis for dealing with the original text, and the translator adopts the "closest to natural equivalence" approach in translation to achieve dynamic or functional equivalence. "Foreignization" refers to the accommodation of the linguistic features of foreign cultures and the absorption of foreign language expressions, requiring the translator to approach the author and adopt the source language expressions corresponding to the author's use to convey the content of the original text, that is, to take the source language culture as the destination. Since then, he gradually realized that it is too extreme to regard "Foreignization" and "Domestication" as two opposing elements. Therefore, in the second edition of *The Translator's Invisibility*, he mentioned that "interlingual translation is a reconciliation between cultures, and language is a practice of culture. "There is no absolute dividing line between "Foreignization" and "Domestication", and to a certain extent there is some overlap. In cross-cultural translation, translators must not be absolute. Otherwise, the translation will enlarge the conflict between different cultures and reduce the readability of readers. Laurence Venuti's revised view is similar to what was once put forward by Homi Baba who once defined his cultural translation this way: "relying on the concept of cultural differences, I try to put myself in the position of the boundary, in the productive space of the cultural construction as a difference and in the spirit of difference or otherness" [6]. He advocated that culture should be translated to each cultural text in its own space. From this, we can see that the principles and norms of translation are also constantly changing. In order to better carry out translation activities under the background of globalization, we should conform to the trend of the times, grasp the characteristics of the times and conduct effective cross-cultural translation, so as to promote the equal exchange and dialogue among cultures from a macro point of view.

Based on the characteristics of different eras and different languages, a reasonable choice of translation methods can maximize the accessibility of intercultural communication and promote dialogue and communication between cultures. The following three translation methods are mainly used to explain the translation of Internet popular words in different cultural contexts.

4 Research Methods

4.1 Literal Translation

The literal translation method refers to a translation method in which the translation is consistent with the language form or structure of the original text on the basis of accurately expressing the meaning of the original text. According to Newmark's words, literal translation means “when the original language is translated into the target language, the syntactic structure of the original language should be respected despite the change of the language environment”. Mr. Xu Yuanchong once said, "literal translation is such a method that puts the faithfulness to the original content first, the faithfulness to the original form second, and the smoothness translation the third [7]. It can be seen from the above-mentioned that Newmark and Xu Yuanchong have similar views [8]. Therefore, we can understand the literal translation method as retaining the original text information to the maximum extent based on the characteristics of the original text, and at the same time, conducting translation according to the original word order, to reflect the deep and superficial structure of the original text. The following are three typical examples of literal translation under cultural context of the original language. (Table 1)
### Table 1. Examples of Literal Translation.

| Examples                     | Reference Translation | Analysis                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| "The spirit of craftsmen"   | Craftsman spirit      | Craftsman spirit is a professional spirit of dedication, excellence, focus and innovation. The expression "craftsman spirit" originated from Nie Shengzhe, who cultivated the first-class carpenters from this spirit. In the past, the society was impetuous and people were only concerned about pursuing the benefits that can be obtained in a short period of time and neglected the quality of products. When people mentioned products "Made in China", they would think of words like fake and inferior. But with the adjustment of our national industrial strategy, now the level of "Made in China" is at the front of the world, and the we are striving for the perfection of products. The Craftsman spirit is an important measure of the progress of social civilization, the spiritual source of "Made in China", the brand capital of enterprise competition and development, and the moral guidance of personal growth. The two words Craftsman and spirit when combined together form the expression Craftsman spirit. The translation can accurately and aptly express the meaning of the original text as well as the structure and form of the original text. The word comes from the conversation between Wang Sicong and his father Wang Jianlin (Asia's richest man in 2017), meaning to buy all. With the rapid development of China's economy, buying whatever you want is not only a description of the behavior of rich people buying things. With various sales activities of major e-commerce platforms such as the ones on June 18th and November 11th, etc. constantly stimulating consumers to buy goods, buying whatever you want is also used to describe the behavior of mass consumers to buy a large number of goods they like. Buying whatever you want means "buy what you want", which is consistent with the attitude we want to express behind the original meaning. The world first appeared in a resignation letter from a female psychology teacher in Henan Experimental High School. The reason for her resignation includes only 10 words: "The world is so big and I wanna see it." The netizens commented that this was "the most emotional resignation letter in history, not one of them". Nowadays, with the rapid development of China's economy, people's quality of life is also improving day by day. In addition to meeting the basic material needs, people are eager to pursue spiritual wealth. "The world is so big, and I wanna see it" expresses the desire to walk and the hope of life. The translation is simple and direct. The accurate translation of the original text also aptly expresses the meaning behind it. |
| "Buy buy buy"                | Buy whatever you want |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| "What a big world! I want to see it" | The world is so big, and I wanna see it. |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

#### 4.2 Free Translation

The free translation method refers to the method that is usually used when it is difficult to explain the meaning of the word itself through literal translation. The *Chinese Dictionary of Translation Studies* believes that "free translation is one of the main translation methods alongside the literal translation[9]. Free translation is defined as the translation with the same content and different forms, that is to say, it takes the original form as the standard, and the expression form of the translation is conducted in different ways." It breaks through the constraints of form and content in literal translation on the basis of comprehensive understanding of the meaning of words and changes the expression of words according to actual needs and word connotations, which makes it more flexible and adaptable. In the process of literal translation about some internet vocabulary, due to the different cultures behind the vocabulary, it is difficult to find the appropriate English vocabulary corresponding to it by the simple literal translation, and it’s difficult to fully convey the multiple or potential meaning of vocabulary. All in all, the free translation method plays an important role in the transmission of meaning of lexical meaning and the cultural connotation. The
following are two examples reflecting the use of free translation method under the cultural context in China. (Table 2)

| Examples | Reference Translation | Analysis |
|----------|-----------------------|----------|
| "The power of the flood" | 1) I have given my full play. 2) I have spared no effort. 3) I have swum up to my potential. | The term "I have swum up to my potential." was selected by the magazine Yaowenjiaozi (the name of which refers to the scrutiny of words) in 2016 as the internet buzzword of the year. It originally refers to a power that can destroy the world at the beginning of heaven and earth, which has been mentioned from time to time in ancient Chinese literature. At the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, swimmer Fu Yuanhui made an extremely exaggerated "expression pack" after the competition in an interesting and vivid way to show that she had made great efforts and had no strength. At one time, the expression “I have swum up to my potential” spread all over the network. Netizens gradually use “the power of flood and famine” to express that they have done their best or have fully explored their potentials. The popularity of “I have swum up to my potential” can not only be attributed to the exaggerated and interesting use form but also reflects the common and contented values of the Chinese people nowadays. Therefore, in translation, we can't get tangled in the literal meaning of the expression but translate it from the popular meaning to convey the unique life feelings behind the words. For example, it may be translated as "I have given my full play", "I have spared no effort" or "I have swum up to my potential". In this way, the "I have swum up to my potential" will be fully paraphrased, and the Chinese people's sense of easy satisfaction can also be transmitted. |
| "On the tip of the tongue" | A bite of sth. | "A Bite of China" —— a documentary broadcast in CCTV in 2012 showed the food ecology as well as rich and colorful food culture in all parts of China and has aroused widespread concern. For a while, various kinds of expressions regarding "a bite of something" were used by netizens to express the food in a certain place or food-related items, and gradually extended and expanded the Chinese food culture. From the perspective of cultural context, if you literally translate it as the tip of the tongue, you can't convey the meaning of the vocabulary at all. And if the translation is a bite of sth., it is very vivid. When Bite is used as a verb, it means "the act of biting", but when it is used as a noun, it means "one bite". The meaning of "sth. on the tip of the tongue" leaps to the paper, giving the readers an intuitive impression and containing the cultural meaning of the word in Chinese as well. |

4.3 Annotation Translation

In the process of English translation, when both literal translation and free translation cannot accurately translate the specific meaning of a word, the annotation method is usually used. Many internet buzzwords have multiple meanings due to the use of scenes and the variety of objects used, and the difference between the meanings is large. If the annotation method is not used, the target readers may misinterpret the meaning and we cannot achieve the goal of cross-cultural communication, nor can we better disseminate modern Chinese culture. Therefore, it is necessary to add explanatory notes after literal translation. The subsequent are typical examples of annotation translation with cultural context taken into consideration. (Table 3)
Table 3. Examples of Annotation Translation.

| Examples       | Reference Translation                                                                 | Analysis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| “You will see” | You know that — — It's something we can’t go into detail, but we all know what it means, or something similar to what we've been through together.                                                                           | “You know that” is usually used in some scenes where it is not easy to elaborate, but are tacit. At the beginning, it was a metaphor of some indecent events. But it gradually developed into something that is tacit, becoming a mild buzzword. Another usage generally appears in literary works, which means that we have experienced similar things, so you understand my tiredness and suffering, and so many people are experiencing my feelings as well. In the construction of the party and government, “You know that” also reflects some problems in the development of our party. Strengthening the party's construction of a clean government in China also displays the party's good spirit of seeking truth from facts and understanding mistakes. It expresses the implicit personality of Chinese culture in a modern black humor. If it is just a simple literal translation, it can not express its meaning of unique Chinese characteristics, and it will not be able to play a good role in spreading Chinese culture. With the development of China's urbanization and the demand for road traffic development, China has experienced a period of house demolition and soaring house prices. For that reason, many people have become millionaires overnight. But the way they show their wealth is to buy a lot of rustic and expensive things. One of the meanings of rich redneck is that they are people who suddenly become rich, but have no purchase tastes comparable to their wealth which generally used for mocking. The second meaning that is derived later refers to the people who are rich, irrational in consumption, and like to show off. This meaning is more moderate. It shows the rapid development of China’s economy and infrastructure around 2010. After experiencing the 2008 world economic crisis, China has had little impact by implementing the right policies. But it is still weak in terms of world export trade. China’s export trade is also not optimistic, But this has greatly promoted investment from all walks of life. The government investment and private investment have greatly restored and boosted China’s economy. In 2010, the GDP was 397.98 billion yuan, a nominal increase of 16.7%. In this sense, the rapid growth of wealth has also produced many different groups of people, and rich redneck is one of them. If it is just a simple literal translation, it may be simply understood as a rich person who comes from the countryside, so it needs to be further explained so that its multiple meanings can be understood and the purpose of cross-cultural communication achieved[10][11]. |
| “Vulgar tycoon”| rich redneck - Originally referred to rich people in the countryside who are rich and have no taste, it now refers to people who are rich, irrational, and like to show off.                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

5 Conclusion

Behind the internet buzzwords is a faster-paced culture that China has shown at different stages of its development. It reflects the cultural and ideological transformation in the development process of modern China, and it is a commemorative product of the times. The translation of internet buzzwords should follow its original characteristics of the times and reveal the cultural values behind it. Nowadays, as the cultural exchanges become increasingly frequent, internet buzzwords not only "exist on" computer keyboards, but also more widely appear in CCTV news, diplomatic news conferences and other formal occasions. They are changing from small to large and from shallow to deep highlighting the value behind it. As an emerging language that is different from traditional languages, it plays a promoting role beyond its semantic characteristics in the field of cross-cultural communication. Intercultural communication is not only an important driving force for the progress of human civilization, but also an inherent requirement for maintaining the cultural diversity of the world. Chinese-English translation of internet buzzwords from the perspective of
cultural context, can help to promote Chinese culture to the world while spreading Chinese native elements. Therefore, in view of the cultural background of the rise of internet buzzwords, flexible selection of appropriate translation strategies will help us further achieve cross-cultural communication.

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