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An Analysis of the Translation of *Keywords to Understand China* from the Perspective of "Three-Dimensional" Transformation in Eco-translatology

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Abstract

In recent years, propelled by China's sustained and robust advancements across political, economic, and cultural domains, an abundant array of "Chinese keywords" imbued with rich connotations and distinct temporal characteristics have emerged. These keywords encapsulate China's unique cultural essence and hold pivotal significance in facilitating a global comprehension of China and fostering international exchanges. As China marches towards global integration and the bolstering of its international discourse, the accurate translation and precise interpretation of these terms become exceedingly critical. From the perspective of Eco-translatology, this paper uses the Russian translation edition of *Keywords to Understand China* as the subject of study to analyze various translation strategies within the framework of adaptive selection from the perspective of three-dimensional transformation. The analysis emphasizes an exploration of language structure, cultural connotations, and communicative efficacy within the translation process. By delving into and dissecting the translation methods applied in the Russian version of *Keywords to Understand China*, a deeper understanding of conveying the distinct connotations of these terms accurately and effectively in cross-cultural communication is achieved, fostering mutual understanding and communication across various facets encompassing Chinese and foreign political, economic, and cultural domains.

Keywords

Eco-translatology, Three-dimensional Transformation, *Keywords to Understand China*, Chinese-Russian Translation

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China comprehensively summarized the remarkable transformations and outstanding achievements in various aspects such as politics, economics, and culture in China over the past decade. The interpretation of the 20th National Congress report both domestically and internationally, along with an understanding of China's recent national policies, underscores the significant guiding and explanatory role of Chinese keywords. Distinguished from ordinary vocabulary, Chinese keywords possess distinctive Chinese characteristics and epochal significance, serving as a window for the international community to comprehend China. While the study of the translation of Chinese keywords has garnered attention in the translation community, there has been a lack of unified translation guidelines.

In recent years, the *Keywords to Understand China* translated by the Chinese Translation Research Institute and published by the China Foreign Languages Publishing Administration using a unified multilingual approach, has been oriented towards the world. This publication has interpreted and explained contemporary China's development concepts, paths, domestic and foreign policies, as well as core ideological discourse to the international community.

It has comprehensively shaped China's image and significantly enhanced global understanding of China.

Chinese keywords are part of political discourse (Li Lan, 2023). In recent years, academia has primarily researched the translation of "Chinese keywords" from the perspectives of international communication (Liu Jie, 2021), Cultural Diplomacy (Diao Hong, 2017), as well as Political Equivalence Theory (Kang Yifei & Yang Mingxing, 2022), and Skopos Theory (Fang Ruiqing, 2023). While there have been numerous outcomes in recent years, observations indicate that current domestic research on the translation of "Chinese keywords" is mostly confined to Western translation theories, lacking indigenous innovation (Liu Hong, 2022). Furthermore, there's a prevalence of studies utilizing English as the primary language material, with fewer studies focusing on the Russian language. This paper primarily utilizes the Russian-translated version of *Keywords to Understand China* as the research material for analysis.

1. Eco-translatology

In 2001, Hu Gengshen proposed the feasibility of applying Darwin's theory of natural selection to translation studies, defining the perspective of translation research under Eco-translatology. He elaborated in detail on translators' adaptive selection behaviors, as well as the process, principles, and methods of translation. This marked the initial formation of the basic framework of Translation as Adaptation and Selection. With ongoing research, Hu Gengshen (2008, 2009) expounded the "translator-centeredness" translation concept, outlining the key terminologies and expressions of Translation as Adaptation and Selection. This strengthened the interdisciplinary connections between other translation ideas and Eco-translatology, further presenting the overall appearance of Translation as Adaptation and Selection. The establishment of *the Journal of Eco-Translatology* in 2011 and the International Symposium on Eco-translatology rendered the study of Eco-translatology more systematic and in-depth. As a native translation theory in China, Eco-translatology formed relatively later compared to other disciplines and Western translation theories, has rapidly developed, providing certain operational feasibility and explanatory power for translation practices.

Eco-translatology perceives translation as a creative activity wherein translators, within a specific linguistic and translational ecological environment, adhere to Darwin's theory of "adaptation and selection" from the biological evolution context. This process involves multidimensional adaptation and adaptive selection of the text. In the scope of Eco-Translatology, translation is no longer merely isolated text transformation; rather, it emerges from the harmonious symbiosis within the interactions among the "textual life", "translator survival" and "translation ecology" (Hu Gengshen et al., 2021). Eco-translatology considers multidimensional adaptation and adaptive selection as translation principles, primarily employing language, culture, and communication dimensions' transformation as translation perspectives and operational dimensions, ensuring the highest "degree of holistic adaptation and selection" in the translation of the text.

2. "Three-Dimensional Transformation" in the Chinese-Russian Translation of *Keywords to Understand China*

The Russian translation of "Chinese Keywords" involves the transformation and interpretation of keywords with Chinese characteristics from a translation perspective. The translation of Chinese keywords differs from ordinary vocabulary. On one hand, for better understanding by foreign audiences, the translation considers not only the linguistic information of the source language but also factors like the sociocultural background of the target language and the textual communicative intent. Simultaneously, it upholds "Chinese characteristics," preserving the Chinese values contained in Chinese keywords, showcasing China's cultural confidence. Finally, on the foundation of accurately conveying linguistic and cultural meanings, it emphasizes aesthetic appeal in line with aesthetic requirements.

The linguistic features, cultural significance dissemination, and communicative intent manifested during the translation process of *Keywords to Understand China* align with the research perspectives of the language dimension, cultural dimension, and communicative intent in Eco-translatology. This paper, from the perspective of the "three-dimensional" transformation in Eco-translatology, analyzes the Russian translated text of *Keywords to Understand China*, exploring how translators, by profoundly understanding the connotations of these three dimensions and their interconnected relationships, rationally employ adaptive transformation principles. This approach aims to achieve a "balance" and "harmony" in the translation ecology between the original text and the translated text.

2.1 Adaptive transformation from the linguistic dimension

Russian and Chinese belong to different language families, exhibiting significant differences in language structure

and expression habits. Often, it's challenging to find exact counterparts in Russian for Chinese phrases. Translators need to fully analyze and understand the original text, finding the most suitable words or expressions in the target language while staying faithful to the original content. This achieves an ecological balance between the translated and original languages at the linguistic level.

(1) zhōng guó mèng de jī běn nèi hán shì shí xiàn guó jiā fù qiáng, mín zú zhèn xīng, rén mín xìng fú.

Главное содержание «китайской мечты»—сделать государство богатым и могучим, поднять нацию и принести счастье народу.

(2) zhōng guó de ài guó zhǔ yì, bìng bù shì xiá ài de mín zú zhǔ yì, ér shì guó jì shì yè hé guó jì xiōng huái de ài guó zhǔ yì.

Китайский патриотизм **не сводится к** узкому национализму, это патриотизм, который охватывает взглядом и принимает в свое сердце весь мир...

(3) zhōng guó tè sè shè huì zhǔ yì bāo kuò dào lù, lǐ lùn tǐ xì hé zhì dù sān gè céng miàn. dào lù shì shí xiàn tú jìng, lǐ lùn tǐ xì shì xíng dòng zhǐ nán, zhì dù shì gēn běn bǎo zhàng.

Концепция социализма с китайской спецификой включает в себе три компонента: путь, теоретическая система и политический строй. Первый компонент **указывает на** путь реализации социализма с китайской спецификой, второй (теоретическая система) **является** руководством к действию, а третий (политический строй) **служит** базовым гарантом.

The original “shì” in the three examples has been translated into different forms. In example (1), “shì” defines the fundamental connotation of the Chinese Dream. In such cases, translators often use em dashes to indicate “shì”, dividing the sentence into two parts: the first part presents the concept, and the second part explains it. This makes the translated content clearer, facilitating reader comprehension and adhering to Russian grammar conventions. In example (2), “shì” is translated as “сводиться к чему”, where the original meaning of “сводиться к чему” is “to reduce, compress”, but metaphorically signifies “essentially” or “fundamentally”. Here, this phrase is chosen to emphasize the essence of “Chinese patriotism”, carrying a sense of emphasis in the transmission of meaning. In example (3), a structure of first generalization followed by specification is used, employing parallelism in the sentences to escalate the emphasis. When translated into Russian, the three parts of the sentence with “shì” are respectively rendered as “указывать на” “являться” and “служить”. This choice involves using different words to translate, firstly aligning with Russian word compatibility and usage habits; secondly, enriching the expression in the translation, avoiding repetition, and finally, reflecting an increasing emphasis in the tone of the translated text.

(4) “xiǎo kāng shè huì” shì yóu dèng xiǎo píng zài 20shì jì 70nián dài chū zài guī huà zhōng guó jīng jì shè huì fā zhǎn lán tú shí tí chū de zhàn luè gòu xiǎng.

Стратегическая концепция **среднезажиточного общества** была выдвинуть Дэн Сяопином в конце 70-х начале 80-х годов XX века, в ходе разработки плана экономического и общественного развития Китая.

The term “xiǎo kāng shè huì” is a phrase with distinct Chinese characteristics. In some texts, it was once transliterated as “сяокан шэхуэй”, but this transliteration may be challenging for readers in the target language to comprehend. In “zhōng guó guān jiàn cí” (*Keywords to understand China*), it has been translated from its original meaning to “среднезажиточное общество”, providing an interpretative translation that explicates its significance. This translation constitutes a choice that maximizes adaptability, achieving a transformation of meaning in the language dimension.

2.2 Adaptive transformation from the cultural dimension

Languages are carriers of culture. Different languages embody distinct historical and cultural traits. Translation involves not only linguistic transformation but also cultural collisions and adaptations. From the point of view of Eco-translatology, to achieve the ecological balance between the original text and the translated text at the cultural level requires the translator to make constant choices and trade-offs in the process of translation, and to make adaptive transformation.

(5) mō zhe shí tóu guò hé.

Китайская мудрость—«нащупывая камни, перебираться через реку».

The phrase “mō zhe shí tóu guò hé” is originally a Chinese idiom “mō zhe shí tóu guò hé — wěn dāng xiē”. This expression is straightforward, implying that an individual navigating an unfamiliar river needs to explore it step

by step without assistance from predecessors. The foreignizing translation strategy was used in translation, retaining the original cultural imagery of the Chinese language. Readers of the translated text can comprehend the entire sentence's meaning through directly corresponding words, ensuring no disruption in the cultural ecosystem. Additionally, the translated text introduces “Китайская мудрость” (Chinese wisdom) at the beginning, signifying the embedded Chinese wisdom within this expression. This foreignizing translation strategy preserves the cultural essence and imagery of the Chinese language, allowing Chinese wisdom to transcend its origin and thereby promoting the dissemination and development of Chinese culture.

(6) qí zhì xiǎn míng dì fǎn duì gè zhǒng xíng shì de mào yì bǎo hù zhǔ yì, qí xīn xié lì zuò dà shì jiè jīng jì zhè kuài dà dàn gāo.

Однозначно выступать против любых форм торгового протекционизма за объединение совместных усилий для того, чтобы всем миром выпечь такой **громадный «пирог»**, как мировая экономика.

The translator employed a literal translation approach in the latter part of the sentence, “shì jiè jīng jì zhè kuài dà dàn gāo” (this big cake of the world economy). President Xi, in the article “Align Our Thinking with the Guidelines of the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee”, used "cake" as a metaphor for the achievements in economic and social development, creating a humorous and relatable tone that is easy to understand. In the translation, the translator retained the imagery of “cake”, conveying the same sense of familiarity and humor as the original text. This preservation ensured a smooth transition without any abruptness, aligning the cultural ecosystem between the original and translated text.

2.3 Adaptive transformation from the communicative dimension

Adaptation in the communicative dimension emphasizes the efficacy of translated content in communication. Accurate translation of key terms is a crucial aspect in enhancing the effectiveness of external propaganda dissemination. In international exchanges, precise and concise translations of key terms enable other countries to accurately comprehend our country's theories, principles, and policies, thus achieving and enhancing the communicative effectiveness of our external propaganda efforts.

(7) hé zuò gòng yíng, shì zhōng měi gòu jiàn xīn xíng dà guó guān xì de bì yóu zhī lù.

Взаимовыгодное сотрудничество—**неизбежный путь**, ведущий к построению отношений нового типа между Китаем и США.

The translator used an indirect approach, rendering “bì yóu zhī lù” (the only way) as “неизбежный путь” (inevitable path), which intensifies the tone and to some extent reflects China's firm stance and clear attitude. This method of negation translation adds depth to the translation, reinforces the tone, and effectively employs adaptive selection to fulfill the communicative purpose of the original text.

(8) yán bì xíng, xíng bì guǒ.

Слова **не должны расходиться** с делом, а действия должны давать результаты.

The original text in Chinese presents a neatly structured anadiplosis sentence. However, when translated into Russian, it introduced the conjunction “а” (but), creating a contrasting sentence structure that emphasizes progression. Additionally, the phrase “yán bì xíng” was translated as a negative sentence “не должны +инф.”, signifying “words should not diverge from actions”. Although the sentence structures differ, they preserve the original emphasis. The repetition of “xíng” was translated as "дело" (deed) and "действие" (action) to avoid lexical repetition, aligning with Russian expression conventions. This example demonstrates selective adaptations at the lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical levels, achieving an ecological balance between the original and translated text in terms of communication.

3. Conclusion

In the linguistic dimension, translators, occupying a central role in the translation process, conduct adaptive selection and transformation between the original text and the translated text through word selection, adding explanations, and adjusting word order. This is based on requirements such as word collocation ability, Russian expression habits, and coherence between units of discourse. These adaptations enhance the correspondence between the original and translated texts in terms of connotation, language form, rhetorical emotion, and other aspects, ensuring a more accurate and standardized expression.

In the cultural dimension, due to the differences between language cultures, translators adopt either a foreignizing

translation strategy to retain the original cultural imagery in the absence of shared cultural images or, based on a thorough understanding of the original text, use imagery that the target audience can accept and comprehend to interpret meanings, aiming to minimize misunderstanding.

Adaptive transformation from the communicative dimension focuses on ensuring consistency and balance between the communicative purposes of the translated text and the original text. It presents the Chinese image appropriately and adequately.

The linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions are not isolated but interwoven and intertwined. Only by integrating these three dimensions of adaptation choices, learning by example, and selecting appropriate translation strategies, can true harmony and unity in the translation ecology be achieved.

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