

Study on the Translation of French Comics from a Cross Cultural Perspective: Taking "The adventure of Asterix" as an Example

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Abstract

Translation is a cross linguistic and cross-cultural communication activity. This article takes a cross-cultural perspective and a cultural translation perspective as the theoretical basis. It selects the Chinese version of the famous French manga series The adventure of Asterix for text translation and explores the strategies and methods of translating cartoon texts in cross-cultural translation from several aspects: person names and place names, the use of idioms, as well as the use of spoken and colloquial language. It is emphasized that in the translation process, translators should try their best to adopt translation methods that are easy for readers to accept, achieve the transformation of different cultural elements, and align the translation with readers cognition and aesthetics, achieving better translation results.

Keywords

Cultural Translation, French comics, Cross-culture.

1. Introduction

With the increasingly frequent cultural exchanges between China and France, many of diverse literary works are presented on a large scale in the sight of Chinese readers. French manga, as a special literary form, has been popular among Chinese readers since its creation and use of bubble dialogue boxes in 1925. It has the characteristics of rich illustrations, strong colloquialism, and humorous text. In recent years, it has gradually gained popularity among Chinese readers. However, due to significant social and cultural differences between China and France, a major challenge faced by translators in the process of translating French comics is how to find suitable ways to achieve cultural communication through text conversion in cross-cultural contexts.

2. Cultural Translation Perspective

Since the 1990s, scholars have begun to incorporate translation into cross-cultural research. British scholar Susan Bassnett and American scholar Andre Lefevere first proposed the view that translation is a cultural construction. Viewing translation as an interaction between two cultures. The task of a translator as a cultural interpreter goes far beyond language expression, but also strives to predict the implied meaning. The interpretation of its cultural translation perspective is: (1) Translation should be based on culture as the unit of translation, rather than staying above previous discourse. (2) Translation is not just a simple process of decoding and reassembly, but more importantly, it is also an act of communication. (3) Translation should not be limited to the description of the source language text, but rather to the functional equivalence of the text in the target language culture. (4) Cultures in different historical periods have different principles and norms. (Susan Bassnett, Andre Lefevere, 1996)

Translation studies should not only delve into the internal aspects of the text, but also focus on the external research of the text, that is, the cultural register of the text. Under the guidance of the cultural translation perspective, translation activities are no longer static behaviors of pure language, but are seen as dynamic communication processes in specific cultural backgrounds. Bassnett believes that translation is by no means a pure language behavior, it is deeply rooted in the culture in which the language is located, and [translation is communication within and between cultures]. At the same time, the task of translators is not only to express one language in another language, and [we need to interpret new cultures and aesthetics.] This requires translators to undergo secondary processing and rewriting of the target language text while fully understanding the original text and cultural context, so that readers can accept the information of the target language text and understand the cultural context. Translation also requires rewriting.

For comic works, readers not only appreciate the entertainment conveyed by comics, but also pay attention to the cultural values and functions conveyed by the works. In China, many readers of comics are teenagers. Based on the knowledge composition and cognitive level of this special age group, translators need to fully consider their cultural understanding and acceptance, so that the translation can meet their cultural needs and psychological acceptance as much as possible.

3. The Transformation of Cultural Elements in the Text Translation of French Comic “The adventure of Asterix”

The adventure of Asterix is a French national treasure level manga written by René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo. It has been serialized since 1959 and has been translated into over 110 languages and dialects, becoming one of the symbols of French culture and renowned worldwide. The story takes place in 50 BC, when all but a small village located in present-day Brittany in Gaul (present-day France) was occupied by Rome. The residents of this village, Asterix (resourceful) and his friend Obelix (brave and skilled in battle), as well as other villagers, stubbornly resisted the invasion of the Romans. With the magic potion made by the priest Panoramix, they completed one difficult task after another and defended the village. (Kuai Jia, 2014)

As early as 1994, some publishing houses introduced it to China, and translators have since translated it into Chinese versions. However, in the translation published by New Star Press in 2013, the translator appropriately applied cultural translation concepts and adopted expressions with Chinese cultural characteristics that were easily accepted by Chinese readers to cleverly translate, rewrite, and transform the original text. In the translation, such as: person name and place name; the use of spoken language and idioms, it can give readers a natural and appropriate feeling, making it a classic case.

3.1. Personal and Place Names

In the character creation of the original author Goscinny, person names almost use homophones and antonyms, while retaining the tradition of ancient Roman names, with men ending with x and women ending with a. For example, several main characters in the book: Asterix comes from Asterisk; Obelix comes from obelisk; Panoramix comes from Panorama; Assurancetourix comes from all risks. In the translation of these names, if both transliteration and implicit meaning are considered, it is difficult to find equivalent languages in Chinese. Many versions use transliteration, and New Star Press's version cleverly handles this by highlighting the characteristics of the characters and retaining the transliteration at the end of the name. For example, the translation of Panoramix as [帕诺万能克斯] (Omnipotent) implies that priests have a super strong ability to grasp the overall situation; Assurancetourix is a village minstrel

who enjoys singing, but when he opens his voice, others cannot bear it. Translating it as [爱说唱斯利克斯] (Rapper) highlights the prominent characteristics of the characters; AplusbégaliX is the village chief of another village occupied by the Romans, translated as [三七二十一克斯] (Three times seven equals twenty-one, which means someone who acts recklessly), highlight his character of not thinking and not considering the consequences when doing things; Perclus was a strategist in the Roman army, translated as [摆谱卢瑜斯] (a showman), implying that he deliberately played the role of official.

The translation of place names has also been appropriately handled, such as the four military camps stationed by the Roman army around the Gaul village, which adopted a Chinese phonetic translation strategy, such as Babaorum being translated as [八宝营] (eight treasures camp); Aquarium is translated as [阿瓜营] (Agua camp); Laudanum translates as [绿头营] (green head camp); Translated as [琵琶营] (loquat camp) by Petitbonum, it is humorous and witty, with elements of traditional Chinese culture, combining transliteration and free translation well, achieving the effect of conveying emotions and ideas.

3.2. The use of spoken language and idioms

Cultural elements are embedded in language. Spoken language and idioms are concise, profound in meaning, and loaded with rich cultural personalities, making them a treasure in the Chinese language. In the manga, the pictures are vivid in color and the text is humorous and lively. The translator uses many vivid and interesting Chinese traditional cultural colloquial language and idioms in the translation to express the humor of the original text, which is catchy and vivid to read.

Example 1: [Nous allons te porter non loin du village gaulois.] [我们要带你到高卢村子附近晃荡。]

We will take you to wander around the village of Gaul.

The translator translated the word walking in the original text as wandering has a leisurely meaning, which can better express the author's intention.

Example 2: [Ma peau ne vaut plus un sesterce.] [我这把骨头现在一文不值。]

My bone is now worthless.

Translate the word skin in the original text as bone, because bones have a greater weight and can be better matched with the phrase nothing in the following text.

Example 3: [Saluez vous, donnez vous la main!] [敬个礼啊！握握手！]

Salute and shake hands!

This sentence comes from the Chinese children's song Finding Friends, almost every child in China can sing this song.

Example 4: [Et tandis que les Romains partent en triporteur...] [在罗马人乘坐三抬大轿上路的同时.....]

While the Romans were sitting in the three lift sedan chairs...

The translator combined the illustrations and translated the rickshaw into a sedan chair carried by three people during the travel of ancient Chinese officials, which was just right.

Example 5: [Je me sens très léger!] [我觉得身轻如燕!]

I feel as light as a swallow!

The translator added swallow to the translation, using it as a metaphor for the lightness of a person's body, which is very vivid.

Example 6: [Que de t'être venu fourrer dans la gueule de louve romaine!] [到罗马这儿来就是羊入狼口!]

Coming to Rome is like sheep entering the wolf's mouth!

The translator uses the idiom: sheep enter the wolf's mouth, which is simple and clear.

The following five example sentences are all from Asterix the Gaul. The Romans captured the priest in a military camp and wanted him to brew magic potion for the soldiers. Asterix bravely entered the camp, and the priest made a pot of potion. After the soldiers drank it, their hair grew crazily, and the officials angrily questioned Asterix. Asterix cleverly replied, using expressions related to hair in each sentence, leaving the commander speechless. The translator also utilized many common colloquial translations related to hair in the translation, bringing a sense of humor that is no less than that of the original text.

Example 7: [Poil au menton!] [嘴上无毛，办事不牢!]

A hairless mouth makes things difficult!

Example 8: [Parlons sans couper les cheveux en quatre!] [谈吧，但不要跟我讲像头发丝那样的小事。]

Talk about it, but don't tell me about small things like hair.

Example 9: [Puisque c'est comme ça... la barbe!] [既然你跟我吹胡子瞪眼.....那就算了!]

Since you're blowing your beard and glaring at me That's okay!

The original text only had the word 'beard', but the translator added two actions in the translation: blowing the beard and staring at the eyes. These two actions in Chinese mean 'angry' and are very vivid.

Example 10: [Tout ceci est échevelé.] [所有这些事真是乱发如麻。]

All these things are messy like hair.

Example 11: [Parfois, il a un cheveu sur la langue aussi.] [有时候他说话像嘴里含着一跟头发似的，口齿不清。]

Sometimes he speaks like he has hair in his mouth and his teeth are unclear.

The literal translation of this sentence is "He has a hair on his tongue", which is a French proverb. The translator added the metaphor "When he speaks, his mouth seems to have hair in it" and added "unclear speech" as an explanation, so that readers can understand the extended meaning of this French proverb.

3.3. Existing problems and solutions

The story background of The adventure of Asterix series is set in the year 50 BC, when the Romans believed in ancient Roman gods. Numerous names of ancient Roman gods appear in the original text. For example: Jupiter, Minerva, Toutatis, Juno, Bélénos, Bélisama, Mercury, Mars...The translation adopts transliteration, but due to the huge cultural differences between China and the West, Chinese readers, especially young readers, who have not read Roman mythological stories, do not know the names of these Roman gods, let alone understand the meaning conveyed in the translation.

If the translator uses footnotes in the translation to explain, for example, Jupiter is the king of the gods who governs the realm and mortal world in Roman mythology; Minerva is the goddess of wisdom, the protector of craftsmen, students, and artists; Mercury is a messenger who conveys information to the gods. This can make the cultural background implied in the original text explicit and eliminate the understanding barriers caused by cultural differences among readers.

4. Conclusion

Translation is a cross-cultural exchange activity that uses one's own culture to explain and express foreign cultures. Transforming language and cultural factors from the original text into

expressions in the translated language is the most ideal translation effect. The huge cultural differences between China and France have posed significant obstacles to this transformation. The translators of French manga series *The adventure of Asterix* (New Star Press, 2013) used appropriate translation strategies and flexible translation methods, such as the clever translation of names and places; The familiar use of colloquial language and idioms by Chinese readers has enabled interactive communication between manga works rich in Western cultural elements and Chinese readers with different cultural backgrounds, effectively conveying the language characteristics and cultural information of the works, and achieving excellent translation results. If the names of ancient Roman gods appearing in the text can be explained and supplemented, the translation effect will be more exquisite.

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