

A Normative Study of English Translation of Chinese Urban Rail Transit Station Names from the Perspective of Functional Translation Theory --Taking the English Translation of Chongqing Rail Transit Station Names as an Example

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Abstract:

Taking the English translation of Chongqing Rail Transit station names as an example, this paper discusses the three basic methods and common problems in the translation of station names, i.e., the forced adoption of purely pinyin translation and the problem of non-uniformity of translations under the same system, on the basis of which this paper puts forward countermeasures based on the guidance of the theory of functional translation, that is, to strengthen the paraphrase work of translating the names of stations with distinctive geographic identifiers, and to unify the problem of mixing purely pinyin translation and paraphrase under the same system. On the basis of this, this paper proposes countermeasures under the guidance of functional translation theory, i.e., strengthening the paraphrase translation of common names with distinctive geographic identifiers, unifying the problem of mixing pure pinyin and paraphrase translation under the same system, and at the same time translating the names of Rail Transit stations with distinctive characteristics of Chongqing in pure pinyin.

Keywords: Rail Transit Station Names, Functional Translation Theory, Problems, Countermeasures

1. Introduction

With the development of urban metro systems in China, especially the gradual expansion of rail tran-

sit networks in major cities such as Chongqing, the internationalization of urban public transportation systems in the background of globalization has gradually increased the demand. By the end of 2024, the

Chongqing Rail Transit will have a total mileage of 575 kilometers, comprising 13 lines involving more than 300 stations, and its mileage will be the sixth largest in China, after Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chengdu, and Shenzhen. In addition, Chongqing's large population, high degree of internationalization and rich tourism resources attract a large number of domestic and foreign tourists. Many expatriates, tourists, etc. need to know the subway stations accurately through English information, therefore, the English translation of subway station names has become an important factor to ensure smooth cross-cultural communication.

The English translation of subway station names in China should not only consider the language conversion, but also involves the cultural transmission and understanding. As a famous historical and cultural city, Chongqing Municipality has strong local characteristics and cultural background of its rail transit names, therefore, studying the norms of its English translation is not only a concern of translation academics on the translation problems of China's subway system, but also an exploration of the special problems arising from the translation practice of China's urban public transportation system.

The current translation norms about subway station names are not uniform enough, and the English translation of some cities or individual stations may be irregular, inaccurate or not in line with local culture. Chongqing, as a rapidly developing city, is representative of the English translation of rail transit names, and the study of the norms of its English translation can help summarize the experience and provide a reference for other cities.

2. Definition of Functional Translation Theory

Functional Translation Theory, also known as "Functional Purpose Theory" or "Skopos Theory", was put forward by K. Reiss, a German scholar, in 1971, who proposed that "the specific goals to be achieved by the act of translation" be considered as a new criterion for evaluating translation. In 1971, K. Reiss, a German scholar, proposed to consider "the specific goals to be achieved by the act of translation" as a new criterion for evaluating translations. In 1984, Reiss, together with H.J. Vermeer, wrote *Foundations of Translation Theory*, in which they argued that the translator's main point of reference during translation should not be limited to the source text and its function, which is a departure from the traditional "reciprocal" translation theory. Instead, more consideration should be given to one or more communicative functions that the translated text is expected to fulfill in the cultural context

of the target language. The book also introduces the core concept of "purpose" and makes a distinction between it and several related terms, such as 'goal', which mainly indicates the final result to be achieved by the act of translation, and "purpose", which is the stage of the whole process of achieving the goal. " is the stage of the whole process of reaching the goal, 'intention' is a goal-oriented translation act, which involves the generation and comprehension of the text, and "function" is mainly to explore the meaning of the text from the point of view of the readers of the translated text. Emphasis was placed on making a distinction between the importance of the intentions of the sender and the receiver in translation, as they are often in different cultural and situational contexts. In the early 1990s, the German scholar Christiane Nord devoted herself to further research and exploration of the functional theory of translation. She pointed out that even if there is a close connection between the translated text and the original text, the degree of this connection needs to be determined in relation to the intended function of the translation. In other words, the retention, adjustment or rewriting of the content or elements of the original text in the translation should be decided according to the context and the intended function of the translation. (Luo Rong, 2024)

3. After analyzing the existing translations of Chongqing Rail Transit, the authors found that there are three main methods of translating metro station names in Chongqing, namely, pure pinyin translation, pure paraphrase, and pinyin+directional word/generic name English translation. Accordingly, the authors summarize the main translation methods in the current translation system after analyzing the translation of existing station names in Chongqing, as follows:

3.1 Pure Pinyin Translation:

Pure Pinyin Translation, which is the direct transformation of the names of Rail Transit stations according to Pinyin, occupies a large proportion of the translation of Chongqing Rail Transit station names, and there are currently 14 Rail Transit lines being used in Chongqing, and the proportion of this kind of pure Pinyin Translation in each of them reaches more than 75%. The proportion of this purely pinyin translation in each line has basically reached more than 75%, for example: Chongqing Rail Transit Line 3 "Changfulu", Chongqing Rail Transit Line 9 "Baoshenghu", and Chongqing Rail Transit Line 1's "Laijiaqiao" on Line 1 of the Chongqing Rail Transit, and "Hongyancun" on Line 5 and Line 9 of the Chongqing Rail Transit, which adopts Chinese Pinyin as a direct English translation of Chinese place names. This method of translation

retains the local humanistic characteristics, and the locals will be very familiar with it, and know how to go to their destinations without translation. However, Chongqing is a modern metropolis with a large flow of people, not only from China, but also many international friends, who, when entering the mountain city of Chongqing for the first time, will find it difficult to translate the names of places according to this kind of purely pinyin translation, e.g., “Lu” and “Hu”, if foreigners do not understand the English meaning as ‘Road’ and ‘Lake’, it will be difficult to connect to their destinations. It will bring a lot of inconvenience to the international friends’ traveling.

3.2 .Pure paraphrase:

Pure paraphrase, i.e., combined with the context, the relevant cultural background for translation, mainly for the orientation words, unique words, such as: “Sports Park”, “Happy Valley” in Chongqing Rail Transit Circle Line, and International Expo Center in “Guobo Line”, and “Central Park” in Chongqing Rail Transit Line 10. The advantage of this type of translation is that it is easy for foreign tourists to understand and accurately grasp the information, but this type of translation lacks local characteristics and is completely unfamiliar to people who are not familiar with English in their own country, which is not a perfect translation. Therefore, we might as well make some changes to this kind of pure paraphrase names, so that they can serve both the function of exporting to the outside world and the function of facilitating the local residents.

3.3 .Pinyin + orientation words/common name English translation:

pinyin + orientation words/common name English translation means half phonetic translation and half English translation, which translates orientation words such as east, west, south, north, etc., into English, while the translation of place names remains unchanged. (Gong Chenchen et al., 2015) It also accounts for a relatively large proportion of Chongqing Rail Transit translations, for example, “Yuegang Avenue” in Chongqing Rail Transit Line 5, “Yubei Square” in Chongqing Rail Transit Line 10, “Guoyuan Logistics Hub” in Chongqing Rail Transit Line 4, the moniker is the word used to distinguish each geographical entity, the generic name is the word used to distinguish the class of geographical entities. The proper name is the word used to distinguish each geographic entity, and the common name is the word used to distinguish the class of geographic entities. (Ni Wenjie Wang Ru, 2017). When carrying out the foreign translation of Chinese geographical names, it should adopt the

phonetic translation of proper names and the paraphrase of common names (Mei Huan, 2019). The advantage of this method lies in the balance between Chinese and English and the complementary functions, so many Chinese geographical names are named in this way.

4. Analysis of Errors in English Translation of Chongqing Rail Transit Station Names

4.1 Forced Adoption of Pure Pinyin Translation

In the translation of residents’ settlements, districts, and special topographic features, many places are translated directly with Chinese pinyin, lacking cultural explanations of specific place names, such as ShiliXiang, GaoheZhen and TieluCun. The pinyin of these townships, towns, and villages can only be read by Chinese people, and it is difficult for foreigners to understand the meanings behind the names (Fang Chao, 2022), and there are many such examples in the translation of Rail Transit in Chongqing, such as “Laijiaqiao” and “Baoshenghu” which are mentioned above, if we directly use pinyin instead of English to translate the station name, it will not only make the foreign language listen to the clueless, but also lose the original cultural connotation.

4.2 The translation of the name is not uniform, which is manifested in the pure phonetic translation and phonetic translation of the proper name + English translation of the common name mixed, such as Chongqing Rail Transit Line 5 “Huayan Temple” whose common name ‘Si’ uses the English translation of “Temple”. Chongqing Rail Transit: Baijusi, Longtousi, Shilinsi, etc., but still in accordance with the phonetic translation, translated as “si”, after checking, Baijusi, Longtousi, Shilinsi, three places have temples, it is reasonable to apply “Temple” as a translation, foreigners will also cause some confusion. This will also cause some confusion to foreigners. As for the “Yuegang Ave” mentioned above, the translation of “Dadao” as ‘Ave’ is a good English translation of the common name, and foreigners can understand the meaning of “Ave” here. is the meaning of the Avenue, and Chongqing Rail Transit Line 4 in the “Fu Hui Avenue”, the ‘Avenue’ directly translated as “dadao”, the English translation of the name of the station to implement the unity and standardization of the two standards. The English translation of station names should implement the two standards of uniformity and standardization. Uniformity is also known as consistency, which requires that the translation of the same station name be consistent in different lines; the same common name or special name be consistent

in different subway lines; and the translation of the same station name be consistent in different modes of transportation such as Rail Transit, buses, and high-speed railways (Zhang Wei, 2015), which shows that the normativity and uniformity of the translation need to be strengthened.

5. Translation of Chongqing Rail Transit Station Names under the Guidance of Functional Translation Theory

Functional Translation Theory, also known as “Functional Purpose Theory” or “Skopos Theory”, was put forward by German scholar K. Reiss in 1971, who proposed that “the specific goal of the act of translation” be regarded as a new criterion for evaluating translation. She proposed to consider “the specific goal of the act of translation” as a new criterion for evaluating translations. Emphasis was placed on the importance of distinguishing between the intentions of the sender and the receiver in translation, as they are often in different cultural and situational contexts. (Luo Rong, 2024)

Since Chongqing is a municipality directly under the central government of China, with a large population and no lack of international friends, it is very important to adhere to the theory of functional translation, emphasize the communicative function of translation in the culture of the translated language, and emphasize that the purpose of translation determines the translation, in which the purpose of translation is undoubtedly to make the foreigners understand the meaning of the translated text to make their travel convenient, and at the same time, to strengthen the export of Chongqing’s local culture. The purpose of the translation is to make foreigners understand the meaning of the translation and make their traveling convenient, and at the same time strengthen the output of Chongqing local culture.

For the distinctive characteristics of Chongqing Rail Transit station names, such as: Chongqing Rail Transit Line 2 “Liziba”, “Niujiatuo”, and Chongqing Rail Transit Line 3 “Liugongli”, and Chongqing Rail Transit Line 3 “Sigongli” and so on, seemingly a bit random, but actually carries a deep cultural heritage. It is said that “Li Ziba” named from a folk story about “plum tree”, there are legends “Li Ziba” and “Niujiatuo”. There is also a legend that the names “Li Ziba” and “Niu Jiao Tuo” are related to Lord Lao. When translating these station names, the Chongqing Rail Transit uses phonetic translations without any translation processing, which respects the cultural factors and strengthens the exportability of Chongqing’s local culture.

On the following occasions, it is necessary to pay atten-

tion to the standardization of translation in order to make it easier for foreign friends to travel, although there are many different opinions about the translation of “avenue”, but in the same Rail Transit system, it should be unified, for example, “Yuegang Avenue” and “Fuhuidadao” “Rail Transit station name translation is a kind of practical translation, Ding Hengqi (Ding 2006). The A-B-C (the “Adapt-Borrow-Create” approach) model of practical translation has been put forward, namely The “Adapt-Borrow-Create” approach. Practical translation should take full account of English expression habits, and the core method is to read and refer to a large number of parallel texts, and then imitate and borrow on this premise, i.e., using the imitation translation method. Therefore, the English translation of Rail Transit station names can draw on the practices of other cities at home and abroad. For example, New York Rail Transit roads and alleys are basically abbreviated, such as “181 St”, “Burke Ave”, “Gun Hill Rd” and so on, and the general name is abbreviated, which is concise, efficient and space-saving. It is concise, efficient and space-saving. (Luo Yu, 2023), so for the words with distinctive features, such as “village”, “lake” and “road”, paraphrase should also be used instead of phonetic translation.

6. Conclusion

The naming of Chongqing Rail Transit consists of pure pinyin translation, pure paraphrase, and pinyin+directional word/common name English translation of three kinds, in which there is the problem of excessive pure pinyin translation, and some of the rail station names are overly purely paraphrase, which brings inconvenience to the travel of foreign languages, and there is also the problem of non-uniformity of the phonetic translation of the common name with the phonetic translation, which is deserved to be circumvented in the unification of the system; however, at the same time, some of the rail station names with the characteristics of the Chongqing historical culture are taken purely phonetic translation, which is worth one point to be recognized. However, at the same time, some rail station names with characteristic Chongqing history and culture adopt pure phonetic translation, which protects the due cultural connotation, which is a point worth recognizing. Therefore, only under the guidance of functional translation theory can the translation of Chongqing railroad names give full play to its function in the new era and become a new name card of Chongqing.

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