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Nominalization and Pinyin in Chinese-to-English Translation*

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Abstract: Nominalization is an effective device of conveying experiences and concepts, characterized with information packaging and cognitive schemata and hence motivated. This paper reviews the research of Systemic Functional Linguistics, cognitive linguistics and cultural linguistics on nominalization and proposes that Pinyin expressions in Chinese-to-English translation of national culture be a reflection of nominalization. It is argued that Pinyin can express unique Chinese phenomena and serve as a way for Chinese culture to enter the global stage, and that Pinyin can materialize discourse ideology. Nevertheless, Pinyin should be used with caution for its advantages and disadvantages.

Key words: nominalization, Pinyin expressions in Chinese-to-English translation, ideology, national culture

1. Introduction

Nominalization is a grammatical metaphor in Systemic Functional Grammar. It embodies the functions of static information packaging, probably first occurring in texts of science and technology and then extending to other fields. In translation from Chinese to English, Pinyin (Romanization using the Chinese letter pronunciation marking) is more often than not adopted, particularly when events, objects and persons uniquely related to China are concerned. In this paper we will first explore the notion of nominalization from such perspectives as Systemic Functional Grammar, cognitive linguistics and cultural linguistics. Afterwards, we shall illustrate that as a translation device Pinyin can be regarded as nominalization, highlighting discourse ideology. Nevertheless, there are disadvantages in using Pinyin. Hence, it is necessary to use Pinyin with caution in the Chinese-to-English translation.

2. Nominalization

In Systemic Functional Grammar nominalization is related to grammatical metaphor, which differs from lexical metaphor. "*A flood of people*" is simply a lexical metaphor, equivalent to "*many people*". In a similar vein, the word "*fox*" in "*he is a fox*" is a lexical metaphor, meaning "*cunning*". In the eyes of Systemic Functional Grammar, metaphor is interwoven with syntax or morphology and nominalization is a powerful means of grammatical metaphor. For instance, "*the car industry was nationalized in this city in 1956*" can be converted to a nominalization — "*the nationalization of car industry in this city in 1956*". In terms of origin, Chaucer first used

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nominalization in 1391 during the Renaissance. Halliday and Matthiessan (2008, p. 284) hold that nominalization is an information packaging. Professor Hu (2004, p. 186) distinguishes the "rough" from "refined" expressions, corresponding to non-nominalization and nominalization termed as Doric and Attic respectively by Halliday.

Cognitive linguists explore nominalization from the perspectives of experience philosophy. Hayvaert (2003, pp. 42–50) expounds the cognitive features of nominalization from the angle of usage-based model. First, nominalization reflects the schemata and schematic expansion of low-level and high-level cognitive components. Take "*all the interesting people*" for example. "*People*" is a high-level cognitive component, whereas "*all*", "*the*" and "*interesting*" are low-level cognitive components, their composition being a result of schemata and schematic expansion. Second, nominalization occurs as language use interacts with linguistic system, displaying such features as entrenchment and specificity. In the diachronic light it has been prolific. Third, nominalization demonstrates rank shift, reclassification, and especially functional reclassification.

Nida (2004, pp. 75–77), a famous translatologist and cross-cultural expert, analyzes the nominal group "the reinforcing impacts of natural resource depletion and human destitution" in "the reinforcing impacts of natural resource depletion and human destitution are exemplified by trends in the world's farmlands". He argues that the difficulty of understanding this clause lies in structural complexity, while in translating the specified nominal group attention must be paid to semantic features and relations as well as the stylistic demand of the target language. Nida's cross-cultural view reminds us that nominalization is related to translation strategies.

3. Pinyin and Nominalization

In translation from Chinese to English, particularly when unique Chinese events, objects and persons are involved, Pinyin is commonly adopted. In fact, Pinyin pertains to a matter of translatability vs. untranslatability. Feng (1996, pp. 11-13) proposes the dichotomy of translatability and untranslatability. First, untranslatability is inextricably a byproduct of context. Different people have different understandings of a certain expression in the target language. Hence, untranslatability may come into being. The Chinese medical term "*qi*" is a good example. Literally, it means "*air*". Nevertheless, in Chinese medicine it means something very much different. "*Qi*" is considered to be the most fundamental and minute material constituting human body and maintaining life activities as well as a physiological function. It seems that no better expression than Pinyin can reveal the meanings of this Chinese medical term. Second, cultural ideology is relevant to untranslatability. In The Analects "*ren*" (literally meaning "*virtue*") is not simply a virtue, but the sum of all virtues. Sun and Tian (2008, pp. 30–32) translate "*ren*" as "*perfect virtue*". This is in fact a semantic translation or a demonstration of domestication, which can hardly reveal the profound Chinese culture advocated in Confucianism. We argue that in this case semantic translation is not as effective as Pinyin or "Pinyin + English explanation" — adoption of foreignization or semi-foreignization. As a translation strategy, foreignization can better display an awareness of Chinese culture and contribute to the avoidance of missed translation. According to Xinhuanet.com on Aug. 16, 2013, "*dama*" (literally meaning "*aunts*") become a powerful force of gold purchase as reported by The Wall Street Daily, pushing the prices of gold higher than before. The word "*dama*" illustrates the influence of Chinese culture on the world. Meanwhile, it tells us that Pinyin has a strong life force.

As mentioned above, nominalization is featured with information packaging and schemata in terms of Systemic Functional Grammar and cognitive linguistics, and related to stylistic demand as for cultural linguistics. Our examination on Pinyin shows that most Pinyin expressions in Chinese-to-English translation are nouns or

nominal groups, and consist with the definition and traits of nominalization. Hence, Pinyin can be assumed as a device of nominalization in the English version texts of Chinese information. Pinyin is a phonetic loan or a means of transliteration, and expresses unique Chinese events, objects and persons. For instance, "*yin*" (a Chinese philosophical notion), "*yang*" (a Chinese philosophical notion), "*jiaozi*" (a Chinese food), "*qigong*" (a Chinese fitness exercise) and "*fengshui*" (a Chinese divination) are loaded with strong Chinese cultural traits. If they are put in English rather than Chinese Pinyin they can hardly mean what they are intended to mean. The mascot of 2008 Beijing Olympic Games is another case in question. It was originally expressed as "*Friendlie*", but later changed to the Pinyin version "*Fuwa*". In Chinese, "*Fuwa*" means good luck, loveliness, and friendship. Thus, the English version "*Friendly*" does not suffice to convey the Chinese connotations. In contrast, the Pinyin expression serves the point. What should be noticed here is that Pinyin can express something good as well as something bad which is uniquely Chinese. "*Chengguan*" (administrators in charge of urban order), "*fangnu*" (people who have to work most of their life for an apartment), "*dingzihu*" (urban residents who refuse to move from their original houses to be demolished), "*xiaokang*" (a well-off life as advocated by the Communist Party of China) are cases in this sense. Liu (2010, pp. 38–41) and Zhu (2010, pp. 53–56) have done research on some of these expressions unique in China.

Pinyin expressions in the Chinese-to-English translation may appear in two ways. First, there are literal direct Pinyin expressions, for example, "*tai chi*" (a Chinese fitness program), "*tangyuan*" (a Chinese snack or delicay), "*majiang*" (a Chinese game), and "*moutai*" (a famous Chinese liquor). It is noted here that some Pinyin expressions are not the contemporary but the Wade system ones, for instance "*tai chi*" and "*moutai*". Second, there are "Pinyin + English" expressions, for example, "*Gong Bao diced chicken*", "*Dong Po stewed pork*", and "*Ma Po tofu*". In this type, the Chinese Pinyin highlights Chinese origins while the English explanations add information to the designated events, objects and persons which may be confusing to those who are unfamiliar with Chinese culture. It is safe to argue that Pinyin is an important device to demonstrate the Chinese culture and ideology. As a means of foreignization, Pinyin contributes to Chinese discursive power on the world stage.

4. Pinyin and Discourse Ideology

Through our discussions, we can find that Pinyin contributes to discourse ideology in translated texts. Ru (2008, pp. 50–54) suggests that translation can serve the "others" (i.e., the target language readers) as well as a cultural pursuit. Pinyin expressions are conducive to the cultural pursuit of the translator's own culture, hence indicating its specialties and even superiority in cross-cultural communication. The translator's role is evident here. Slingerland (2003) recommends that we translate Chinese culture-loaded words using the formula of "original Chinese character + English + Pinyin", for instance, "孝：filial piety (xiao)". Wang (2006) assumes that "cultural turn" has occurred in translation since the 1990s. Ge (1980, pp. 1-8) proposes the term "China English" for unique Chinese events, objects and persons. "*Baihua wen*" is the simplified Chinese expressions in contrast to ancient complex Chinese expressions. Like "*bagu wen*" (old official stereotype of Chinese essay), such Pinyin expressions record history and Chinese features. Chen (2013, pp. 95–100) thinks that we should have a "cultural self-awareness" in translation and publicity, which is a way to establish a positive image for China on the global stage.

Take Chinese cultural publicity for instance. The following is about *huton*g, a narrow alleyway in Beijing (from www.bjta.gov.cn):

> Beijing's hutongs are a glimpse — fast disappearing — of what the city used to look like before the skyscrapers started munching the skyline. A hutong is a narrow alleyway formed by joining together courtyard residences. When you hear people speak of "the hutongs", they will often be referring to the neighborhoods formed by these alleys. In this example, "hutong", revealing classic Beijing features and Chinese culture, cannot be replaced by the word "alleyway". Nevertheless, the English explanation helps foreigners roughly understand what this Chinese cultural phenomenon means. However, as the translation says, "hutong" also means "the neighborhoods formed by these alleys". Hence, the Pinyin expression "hutong" communicates something unique and valuable about Chinese culture to foreigners.

Sometimes, in a text about Chinese culture there may be a number of Pinyin terms. The adoption of multiple Pinyin expressions is conducive to the construction of a set of Chinese images. Consider the following example (from www.bjta.gov.cn):

> As an ancient performing art in China, quyi is a general term that covers several different types of performances in which speech, singing or both are used. As an independent art, it was formed in the middle of the Tang Dynasty and flourished in the Song Dynasty. Now more than 300 forms of quyi are popular among all ethnic groups throughout the country. The most influential and widespread forms are jingyun dagu, meihua dugu, shulaibao, danxian, xiangsheng, pingshu, kuaiban, Tianjin shidiao, xihe dagu, Dongbei dagu, er'-renzhuan, Suzhou pinghua, Yangzhou pinghua, pingtan, Fengyang huagu, Shandong ginshu, Shandong kuaishu, Henan Zhuizi, Sichuan gingyin, Hubei daoqing, yuequ, Shanbei shuoshu and Mongolian haolaibao. Performances consist usually of only one, two or three people, with simple props and no stage scenery. Major singing forms, such as danxian, jingyun dagu and meihua dagu, normally tell short stories and the songs are short. Some combine singing with speech, such as Suzhou pingtan and Xihe dagu, and these are often long pieces. Some are half sung and half spoken, such as kuaiban and Shandong Kuaishu. Talking forms include pingshu and pinghua, which are used to tell long stories which continue over several months, in addition to xiangsheng, which involves short pieces that can be finished in a few minutes or even in a few lines. The performers sit as they sing in some forms, such as tanci, qinshu and pingshu, but walk up and down when singing in the er'renzhuan mode of Northeast China and the Fengyang huagu mode of Anhui Province. In other forms the performers stand, including dagu, uaiban, zhuizi, and qingyin. Singing is accompanied by musical instruments, clappers or drums. Instruments include sanxian, sihu and yangqin.

This text is about Chinese opera and drama art. It is unique, and no equivalent English expressions can be found for the Chinese artistic terms. As a result, Pinyin turns out to be the best way of advocating excellent Chinese art on the international stage. "*Quyi*" consists of many modes and schools; the further explanations of the latter contribute to the development of comprehensive, positive, influential images of the former. It can be argued that Pinyin expressions, used appropriately in a set, do not prevent foreign readers from understanding Chinese culture positively.

Xiao and Fan (2012, pp. 145–148) advocate that discourse ideology be classified into deference, solidarity and hierarchy. In fact, we can even more specifically classify discourse ideology into crediting, neutralizing and devaluating. The Chinese Pinyin expression "*the Duanwu Festival*" rather than "*the dragon-boat Festival*" is an example to credit Chinese culture. Wang (2004, p. 36) argues for "psychological recognition", which means the translator's recognition of his or her own culture and values. Webster (2011) defends for the Pinyin expressions of "*Heung Gong Yan*" using the local dialect rather than "*Hong Kong people*". In Webster's view, "*Hong Kong people*" is a name given by westerners, alluding to something inferior or second-class citizenry while "*Heung Gong Yan*", based on Cantonese, can better show the local people's discursive power and positive cultural identity.

5. Reflections on Pinyin in Translation

As a means of nominalization, Pinyin can have a positive impact on the publicity of Chinese culture. Nevertheless, some principles should be abided by in using Pinyin for translation from Chinese to English.

First, the principle of gains and losses should be noticed. As Halliday (1994, p. 353) mentions, nominalization can be seen as a condensation of clause information and hence some information may be lost in using it. For instance, "*alcohol impairment*" can be explained as "*alcohol impairs*" or "*alcohol is impaired*". In the former case "alcohol" is an agent while in the latter case it is a patient. The semantic difference is obvious here. The Pinyin expression "*fangnu*" emphasizes distinctive Chinese features, but may be confusing to foreign readers. However, those curious foreign readers may spend much time searching for relevant information in order to understand the expression. In this way, information gap is bridged. Zeng (2009, pp. 59–60) mentions that the Chinese expression "*buzheteng*" should be translated as "*no faith wavering, no effort relaxation, and no self-defeating campaign*". In fact, "*buzheteng*" is an expression imbued with Chinese cultural features. If we simply use the Chinese Pinyin "*buzheteng*" in the translated texts, it may evoke a response in foreign readers as "*encore*" (a French expression meaning "*one more*") in English readers. The target language readers can find information complementary to "*buzheteng*" in translated texts. The English language is not purely British or American in these days. The publicly-accepted term "world Englishes" indicates that English expressions are pluralized in modern times, justifying the usage of Pinyin in translation from Chinese to English.

The following example is from www.cntv.cn. In this example, both Pinyin and domesticated English versions are used, which can be seen as a complementation in rendering clear information: *This is a bill of exchange of the Daoguang Period of the Qing Dynasty which is now collected in China Piaohao Museum). The bill of exchange is rectangular. There are characters of "Hui Quan" on the right while "Xin Xing" on the left. It was the unified form of bill of exchange at that time*. Here, "*a bill of exchange*" means the same as "*Piaohao*". Such a translation strategy or technique highlights Chinese culture while offering clear information to foreign readers or viewers.

Second, the adequacy of cultural information should be stressed. In texts Pinyin should show its information transparency and adequacy. Zheng (2010, pp. 86–87) proposes four elements in text translation: wholeness, focus, logical rationality, and cohesion and coherence. If these four elements are adopted, the cultural information conveyed by Pinyin can be revealed.

Take the following Chinese tourism publicity for example (from www.bjta.gov.cn):

> Kunninggong (Palace of Earthly Tranquility), built in 1420, is one of three palaces in the living zone of the Forbidden City. Both in 1514 and 1596, Kunninggong was destroyed by fire disasters, and in 1605 it was rebuilt. In 1798, it was also restored. Qianqinggong traditionally is representative of yang and Kunninggong is yin. These two palaces are built together to show the harmony and oneness of heaven and earth. In this part, "Kunninggong" is a Chinese palace. In translating this name, both Pinyin and English annotation ("Palace of Earthly Tranquility") are used. The Pinyin expression reminds readers that this is a text about Chinese culture while the English annotation indicates the meaning of the Chinese name sounding blessing. The purpose of advocating Chinese culture is strong by means of this translation strategy. Also, in the above excerpt, "yin" and "yang", which are two important Chinese philosophical notions, are mentioned, followed by clear English explanations of their meanings. The intention of using Pinyin to show unique Chinese ideas is fully conveyed in this way.

"*Guizhou Minzu University*" rather than "*Guizhou University for Nationalities*" may be confusing to foreign readers at the first sight, but if they read an introduction to the university, they may find ample information about

minority people and cultures, interethnic studies and minorities-oriented work. Then, they should be able to understand the term. Seen in this way, Pinyin can activate readers' interest in consulting relevant information, which is a means of recontextualization. Part of the introduction to Guizhou Minzu University is:

> Guizhou Minzu University was founded on May 17, 1951 under the jurisdiction of the People's Government of Guizhou Province. As one of the first minorities-oriented universities in China, it is a key provincial higher education institute sponsored jointly by the People's Government of Guizhou Province and the State Commission for Nationalities, awarded the rank of A in the 2007 National Evaluation of Undergraduate Education. The university is located in Huaxi District of Guiyang City, a scenic spot with green mountains and bright waters renowned as "Pearl of Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau".

Two more examples can be shown to illustrate the use of "*minzu*" for minorities-oriented university in China: *Minzu University of China*, and *Yunnan Minzu University*.

There are also cases where "nationalities" rather than "minzu" is used, but the text concerned highlights minority features, for instance: Southwest University for Nationalities; South-central University for Nationalities; Guangxi University for Nationalities; Northwest University for Nationalities; Dalian Nationalities University. Part of the introduction to South-central University for Nationalities is: Located in Wuhan, the political, economic, financial, cultural, educational and transportation center of central China， South-Central University for Nationalities (SCUN) is a comprehensive and key university directly under the administration of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission. Founded in 1951 as South-Central College for Nationalities, it was renamed as South-Central University for Nationalities in March, 2002. Since its foundation, SCUN has implemented the educational policy and ethnic policies of the state. It is committed to cultivation of talents for ethnic communities while following general principles of higher education, thus achieving a rapid and comprehensive development in past decades. In this introduction, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission and ethnic communities show that this university places much emphasis on the education of minority people.

Pinyin expressions are understood through a sound context of information. With sufficient information in texts, the messages that Pinyin indicates are properly revealed. The above two instances — one with Pinyin and the other without Pinyin indicate that Pinyin is a context-bound device in translation from Chinese to English. As Xin and Lai (2010, pp. 32–39) argue, recontextualization is an extension of intertextuality. The strategy of Pinyin rooted in message communication corresponds to the principle of cultural information adequacy.

Third, contextual applicability is worth noticing. At present there are a considerable number of Pinyin expressions in English, such as "*guanxi*" (nepotism) and "*baozi*" (Chinese food). This situation is much related to the impact of media and publicity. In adopting Pinyin in such a context, however, there are some variations worth noticing.

Sometimes, straightforward Pinyin expressions are adopted without further English explanations. This might be related to the extensive influence of Chinese culture. Consider the following two examples (from www.chinadaily.com.cn): 1) *Five hundred people practice tai chi at the "Kung Fu Tai Chi Day" fair held at Plaza de Cesar Chaves park in downtown San Jose on May 18, 2014*; 2) *US first lady Michelle Obama practices tai chi with students at Chengdu No. 7 High School during her visit in Chengdu, Sichuan province, March 25, 2014*. Here, "*tai chi*" is a Chinese fitness program well known abroad; like "*kung fu*", it has entered the English vocabulary, and in using it no further explanation is needed. Notice here that the Pinyin expression is in the fashion of the Wade system — somewhat modified from Putonghua — standard Chinese pronunciation.

However, contrasts always appear in the translation about Chinese culture from Chinese to English. "*The*

Book of Change" is not called "*Yijing*", and "*The Analects*" can hardly be as equal as "*Lunyu*". Both terms, translated in the strategy of domestication, have been widely accepted, and they are not advised to be reformulated in Pinyin. "*Bank of Communications*" cannot be changed to "*Jiaotong Bank*", as the former has been widely accepted and Pinyin does not work here. In contrast, "*Shanghai Jiaotong University*" is not called "*Shanghai University of Communications*" though in both expressions the same Chinese word 交通 is involved. There are indeed some cases where both Pinyin and English expressions are accepted or used together in translating a text from Chinese to English, for example (from www.chinadaily.com.cn): *In the final scene of the movie, Fearless, Jet Li, who plays Huo Yuanjia, one of China's historical heroes and wushu (martial arts) master, wins a Shanghai tournament by beating four international champions, his feat raising the spirits of his countrymen*. This example shows that "*martial arts*" may be more familiar to foreigners while "*wushu*" — a Pinyin expression is gaining understanding and recognition internationally.

6. Conclusion

In this paper nominalization is explored, and Pinyin expressions in the Chinese-to-English translation are found to demonstrate the features of nominalization. Pinyin has its advantages: highlighting cultural distinctiveness, and its disadvantages: information adequacy to be revealed through texts. Considered overall, Pinyin is conducive to introducing Chinese culture to foreign readers and highlighting Chinese discursive power. It can be said that the explorations on Pinyin complement the translation studies from such perspectives as domestication, foreignization, translator's subjectivity and eco-translation. The present research indicates that linguistics and translatology can interact with each other and yield beneficial results.

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