

Original Paper

Translation Problems and Strategies of Tea Names in the Context of the Belt and Road Initiative

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Abstract

In recent years, the rapid development of economic globalization and the Belt and Road Initiative have injected strong impetus into the common development and prosperity of countries along the route, and China's tea trade has also ushered in unprecedented opportunities. Against this backdrop, a series of tea cultural terms, including tea names, have gradually become hot issues in the translation industry. However, due to the diverse varieties of tea, diverse naming methods, and cultural background differences, the translation of tea names in China still has many unsatisfactory aspects. This paper aims to discuss the translation skills of tea names, in order to provide reliable references for improving the translation quality, provide favorable support for the promotion of tea culture, and promote the development of tea trade.

Keywords

Belt and Road Initiative, Tea name translation, Tea Culture Publicity

1. Introduction

The Belt and Road Initiative refers to the joint initiative of the “New Silk Road Economic Belt” and the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road”. This initiative aims to inherit the spirit of the Silk Road, jointly build an open and cooperation platform, and provide new impetus for the common development and prosperity of all countries. The Belt and Road Initiative construction framework is connected to the Asia-Pacific Economic Circle to the east and the European Economic Circle to the west, and is considered to be the “world's most promising economic corridor”. At present, this strategy has brought about a “1+1>2” effect, and countries along the route have benefited a lot from it. As we all know, China is the homeland of tea. In recent years, more and more tea has been exported overseas, which has not only promoted the development of China's economy, but also the spread of excellent traditional Chinese culture, tea ceremony, tea art, tea sets and other tea culture. Tea has also become an important

medium for China to communicate with the world. If Chinese tea wants to go abroad along the route, it should not be limited to selling products overseas, but should spread the excellent traditional Chinese culture contained in tea to the international stage. In this context, the accurate translation of tea name plays a crucial role. However, the current situation of the translation of tea culture terminology in China is not optimistic. The translation of many well-known tea varieties has not been unified, and there are many errors and omissions, which limit the development of international trade and also affect communication and cooperation between countries. Given all these issues, it is important to explore tea name translation strategies.

2. The Significance of the Belt and Road Initiative for Chinese Tea Culture Abroad

Since the proposal of the Belt and Road Initiative, tea has played an important role in Sino-foreign exchange activities. China, as a country known for its etiquette, has not only frequently presented tea as a state gift, but also insisted on using tea as a means of friendship in various large-scale activities. (Zhang, 2022).

1) It contributes to the international marketing of tea culture industry. The Belt and Road Initiative has received positive responses from more and more countries and international organizations, becoming a popular international public product and cooperation platform. Nowadays, there is a huge potential market for tea consumption, and tea export trade has ushered in an important opportunity period. Meanwhile, projects such as “tea culture tourism” and “international tea culture experience” have emerged as a new economic growth point in the tea industry. From the planting and picking of tea, to the processing of tea, and even the tea ceremony performance, the development of tea culture relics are all very important economic forms. Under the influence of the Belt and Road Initiative, more and more foreign people have experienced these activities, which has aroused their strong interest in Chinese tea culture, and thus promoted the internationalization of tea culture dissemination and related industries.

2) Contribute to cross-cultural communication of tea culture. The development of tea culture in China has gone through thousands of years, and has been an important part of China’s long-standing cultural heritage. The spiritual connotation of tea culture is a cultural phenomenon with distinctive Chinese cultural characteristics formed by combining tea picking, tea making, tea appreciation, tea tasting and other habits with Chinese cultural connotation and etiquette. Tea culture embodies the ideas of “benevolence”, “virtue”, “harmony”, and carries excellent qualities such as respect for the elderly and love for the young, and the pursuit of tranquility and simplicity, and important knowledge of traditional Chinese medicine. With the deepening development and implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, tea culture has formed a systematic output form in the process of external dissemination. This not only helps to enhance the cultural soft power of our country, but also is conducive to establishing a good international image of China and spreading our traditional Chinese culture worldwide.

3) It helps to enhance China's image. The “Belt and Road” initiative not only promotes China's economic development but also injects momentum into the establishment of friendly cooperative between China and other countries, effectively promoting exchanges and cooperation in politics, economy, culture, and other fields along the route. With the prosperity and development of international trade, more and more countries have come to appreciate China's long history and splendid civilization through its traditional culture, and China's image as a lover of peace has become more deeply rooted in people's minds. Strengthening the external propaganda of tea culture is conducive to establishing a more comprehensive and three-dimensional image of China to the world, and is of positive significance to establishing a good international image and expanding the influence of traditional Chinese culture.

3. The Complex Naming of Chinese Tea

China is the homeland of tea and the birthplace of tea culture. The discovery and use of tea has a history of more than 4,700 years, and it has remained popular and world-famous. It is said that tea drinking in China began in the time of the legendary Emperor Shennong, was popularized by Duke of Lu in the Zhou dynasty, flourished in the Tang dynasty, and became widespread during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Tea culture is a unique and fascinating flower in Chinese culture that incorporates the ideas of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and other schools of thought. China has a wide variety of tea, and they are named in various ways. Some teas are named after their place of origin, some after their color, and others after historical or literary references. Many tea names not only sound beautiful but also contain profound cultural connotations.

1) Named according to the shape. Naming according to the shape can vividly reflect the characteristics of tea. For example, “Old Jun eyebrow tea” is named after its shape resembling a curved eyebrow, while “Baekho Silver Needle” is known as the “beauty” and “king” of teas due to its plump buds covered in silver hairs and straight, needle-like shape.

2) Named according to the tea soup or flavor. Many teas are named after the flavor or color of their tea soup, such as “Huangjin Gui” named after its golden soup color and unique aroma reminiscent of osmanthus fragrans, and “Milan Xiang Dancong tea” named after its distinct sweet potato flavor and elegant and mellow orchid aroma.

3) Named according to the place of origin. It is also common to name teas after the place of origin, such as “Xinyang Maofeng” from Xinyang City, Henan Province, and “Pu'er Tea” from Pu'er City, Yunnan Province.

4) Named according to the picking period and season. According to different picking periods, tea can be divided into Mingqian, Tanchun, Cichun, Mingchun, Yuqian, Dongpian, Xiacha, etc.

5) Named according to famous mountains and rivers in the place of origin. The ancient saying goes, “Sacred mountains produce sacred herbs.” Tea often comes from famous mountains and rivers. Combining the name of the tea with the name of the scenic spot achieves a mutually beneficial effect in promotion. Representative teas in this category include Xihu Longjing, Huangshan Maofeng, Jingtian

Lixue, Lushan Yunwu, and Taihu Cuizhu.

6) Named according to legends. Some tea names are derived from mythology or folklore, embodying profound Chinese culture. “Wenjun Green Tea” takes its elegant name from the birthplace of the Western Han Dynasty talented woman Zhuo Wenjun, which is Qionglai City in Sichuan Province; “Da Hong Pao” originates from the top scholar among those who came to the capital for the imperial examination. He was rewarded for helping the empress dowager in the capital relieve abdominal pain with tea. He covered the tea with his own red robe, and the tea tree shone red light, thus being named “Da Hong Pao”; “Oolong Tea” originated from a tea farmer named “Wulong” during the Yongzheng period of the Qing Dynasty, who forgot to process the tea leaves he had collected that day while hunting. The next day, when he made tea, he found that the tea leaves were not as bitter as usual, and were especially mellow and fragrant. After repeatedly making it, he finally produced a new variety of tea with excellent quality, known as “Oolong Tea”.

4. The Current Situation of Tea Name Translation

The 64 countries along the “Belt and Road” (excluding China) have diverse languages and significant cultural differences. There are 53 official languages used in these countries, with Arabic, English, and Russian being more commonly used. Accurate translation of tea names is an important means of promoting external propaganda and showcasing China’s cultural soft power. However, since a systematic approach to tea name translation has not yet been established, most translations are independently completed by tea companies and local governments to promote their products. As a result, the quality of translations is uneven, and the following issues have mainly arisen:

1) Misassociated translations. Some tea names are the same as common physical names, which is easy to produce false associations and lead to translation errors. Some teas are processed from flowers, and tea names are often named after flowers, such as rose tea and jasmine tea, but not all teas named after flowers are related to this flower, such as Narcissus tea. The English word for “水仙” is “narcissus”, so this kind of tea is often translated as Narcissus tea. This is a typical misassociation. This kind of tea originated from Jianou Zhuxian Cave in Fujian Province. In the local dialect, “祝” is pronounced the same as “水” in the surrounding areas. Therefore, people often mistake Zhuxian Cave as its place of origin, and the tea got its name from there. Translating narcissus tea as “Narcissus Tea” can lead readers to mistakenly think that it is made from narcissus flowers. Such errors can prevent readers from understanding the characteristics of the tea and appreciating Chinese tea culture.

2) Multiple translation versions and inconsistent terminology. As mentioned earlier, some tea names are based on a single characteristic, while others are named using a combination of several characteristics. “Dongting Biluochun” is an example of the latter. “Dongting” refers to the place where the tea is grown, the Dongting Mountain in Suzhou, Taihu Lake. “Biluochun” refers to the color and shape of the tea leaves, which are green and curled like a snail. “Spring” indicates that the tea is harvested in early spring. These five characters reflect the tea’s place of origin, color, shape, and

harvest time, which makes translation challenging. Common translations include “Dongting Biluochun,” “Biluochun Tea,” and “Spring Spiral.” When translating these tea names, we need to analyze each element one by one. For example, if all the elements of “Dongting Biluochun” are translated, the name would be too long and would not be consistent with the nature of naming things. Therefore, the author here translated it as “Dongting Biluochun Tea.” “Lu’an melon-seed-shaped tea” is a traditional Chinese famous tea with a long history and rich cultural connotations. “Lu’an” refers to the place where the tea is grown, and “melon-seed-shaped” refers to the shape of the tea leaves, which are flat and resemble melon seeds. This creates difficulties in translation, and multiple translations have emerged, such as “Lu’an Melon Seed Tea” or “Lu’an guapian Tea,” but none of them fully capture the unique characteristics of this tea. The author translated it as “Lu’an melon-seed-shaped tea” (Liu, 2014). If we can promote the use of standardized tea names in the international market and make these names possess high authenticity and long-term memory retention, it will effectively enhance the brand’s competitiveness, promote cultural exchange, and strengthen the cultural connections between China and Western countries.

3) There is a shortage of translation talents for promoting “Tea Culture” overseas. The main purpose of promoting overseas translation is to showcase the charm of China to the world and let foreign audiences understand China’s development. Chinese tea culture is profound and rich, and it embodies excellent traditional culture. Therefore, translation talents in related fields are particularly important for promoting overseas. The high-quality construction of the Belt and Road Initiative not only opens up a path to common prosperity for countries along the route but also creates new opportunities for China’s open development. The countries along the route have diverse languages and cultures, which requires translators to have a deep understanding of their customs, beliefs, and practices, and to be proficient in Chinese-English translation methods. They must use authentic expressions to convey Chinese culture and expand its global influence.

5. Improving the Translation Quality of Tea Names and Promoting the International Promotion of Tea Culture

As China’s international status continues to rise and its voice continues to strengthen, people from all over the world have a growing desire to understand Chinese culture. As a health beverage, tea is increasingly accepted by foreign people. If we want to promote Chinese tea culture to the world, it is urgent to improve the translation of tea names.

1) Unified and standardized translation of tea names. “Culture-loaded terms” in Chinese culture refer to words, phrases, and idioms that signify unique cultural elements. These words reflect the unique activity of a specific ethnic group accumulated during a long historical process that distinguishes it from other ethnic groups (Liao, 2000, p. 232). There has always been a significant problem in the promotion of Chinese culture, which is that there is no corresponding concept for culture-loaded terms in English. Due to the different understandings and translation strategies of

translators, there is often the phenomenon of one tea having multiple translations. However, the diversity of English translations of the same thing often hinders the promotion of Chinese culture. The translation of tea names plays an important role in promoting tea trade and cultural promotion. Tea name translations should not only be easy for foreign readers to understand but also accurately reflect the cultural connotations of tea, thereby effectively increasing the brand recognition of tea. Therefore, we should establish a specialized organization, cultivate professional talents to engage in tea culture research, and make tea culture a truly systematic culture. We should also cultivate professional translation talents to engage in tea name translation-related work and jointly discuss the establishment of uniform standards or the compilation of terminology dictionaries. Foreign publicity and translation personnel should uphold a serious and responsible work attitude, solidify their knowledge foundation, continuously improve their personal abilities, proficiently grasp the language characteristics of English, and accurately convey information using native language.

2) Pay attention to the reader's understanding and acceptance. In the process of cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries, cultural omission is a very common behavior. Due to differences in thinking modes, language systems, and cultural backgrounds between China and the West, cultural omissions often occur in the process of translating tea names. This puts higher requirements on the professionalism of translators. They should not only fully consider the feelings of the target language readers and adopt translation strategies that are easy for them to accept from their perspective, but also have a keen insight into cultural omissions in the original text and use appropriate strategies to compensate for them. This ensures the accuracy of cultural dissemination in external publicity. For example, the tea name Wen Jun Green Tea is translated with an added explanation that Wen Jun is a talented female in the history of China. This method of adding explanation not only facilitates readers' understanding, but also stimulates their interest in Chinese culture, which is helpful for cultural dissemination.

3) Build tea culture brand and enhance competitiveness. Cultural output often relies on products, and tea culture is no exception. With the spread of tea culture, the foreign trade of tea and tea-related products has become increasingly prosperous. Many companies print the efficacy and brewing methods of tea on the packaging of their products, attracting a large number of potential consumers. In addition, some tea companies print relevant cultural elements on the tea ware itself, showcasing Eastern culture and arousing the attention of foreign consumers to this cultural form. Furthermore, companies should build their own tea culture brand, strictly control product quality, and ensure after-sales service, so that the brand gradually becomes a representative of tea culture. They should also do a good job in the external promotion and English translation of tea culture, making it a bridge for communication among the countries along the Belt and Road Initiative.

6. Conclusion

As a part of traditional Chinese culture, tea culture carries the long history and cultural heritage of the Chinese nation. Nowadays, the high-quality joint construction of the “Belt and Road” not only opens up new opportunities for China’s open development, but also opens up new opportunities for the external dissemination of tea culture. This highlights the importance of tea name translation. To a certain extent, the problems of tea name translation mentioned above seriously affect the dissemination and development of Chinese tea culture. This requires translators to not only have a good command of tea culture knowledge, but also to preserve Chinese cultural characteristics as much as possible in the translation process, making the translation easy to understand for readers while also retaining cultural characteristics. Additionally, the issue of unifying tea name translation and standardizing terminology expression should also be given attention by relevant departments. At the same time, relevant departments should also use various methods to promote Chinese tea culture, expand the influence of tea culture, and further enhance China’s cultural identity in the international community.

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