

Original Paper

A Study on the Translation of Internet Buzzwords from a Cross-cultural Perspective

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Abstracts

Studying the translation strategies of internet buzzwords not only helps improve translation quality but also promotes communication and understanding between different cultures. By analyzing the translation practices of internet buzzwords, this study can delve into issues of cultural differences in cross-cultural communication, identify commonalities and differences between cultures, and thus propose more effective translation strategies to support exchanges across different cultural backgrounds.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the challenges in translating internet buzzwords and their impact on cross-cultural communication, exploring translation strategies that can effectively promote understanding and exchange between different cultures. The research questions primarily focus on the following aspects: What is the role of internet buzzwords in cross-cultural communication? What are the main challenges encountered during the translation process? How can these challenges be effectively overcome through translation strategies to achieve accurate cultural transmission and emotional resonance? Through in-depth research on these issues, this study aims to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for the translation of internet buzzwords in cross-cultural communication, with the goal of promoting better understanding and exchange between different cultures worldwide.

Keywords

internet buzzwords, cross-cultural perspective, translation theory

In today's era, the rapid development of network technology has not only greatly changed people's lifestyles but also profoundly influenced the patterns of cultural exchange. As a unique cultural phenomenon, internet buzzwords has become an indispensable part of cross-cultural communication in the context of globalization. These popular phrases often carry rich cultural connotations and social significance, spreading at an unprecedented speed and with an extensive reach. Therefore, translating internet buzzwords is not just about converting language and text; it is also about conveying cultural

meaning and social context, which is crucial for enhancing understanding and communication between different cultures.

As globalization continues to deepen, internet buzzwords are increasingly appearing in cross-cultural communication scenarios, presenting new challenges to translators. One characteristic of internet buzzwords is its heavy reliance on specific cultural backgrounds and social contexts. This means that translating it not only requires accurately conveying the literal meaning of the original text but also appropriately expressing its cultural connotations and emotional nuances. That how to maintain the original flavor while ensuring that readers in the target language can understand and accept it has become a significant challenge in translating internet buzzwords.

As an important component of contemporary cultural exchange, the translation of internet buzzwords has gradually become a focal point in academic circles. Peng Jia (2023), based on cognitive linguistics theory, delved into the challenges of translating metaphors in internet buzzwords and proposed a translation method that combines dynamic context analysis to address language issues during the translation process, aiming to enhance accuracy and effectiveness. This marks the expansion of internet buzzwords translation research into the field of cognitive linguistics, highlighting the importance of understanding the deeper meanings of language in the translation process. Qiu Man (2023), from the perspective of translation meme theory, analyzed English translation strategies for internet buzzwords, emphasizing the crucial role of cultural dissemination and communication in the translation process, pointing out that translation is not only a transformation of language but also the spread of cultural elements. Wang Anmin (2023) adopted a corpus-based research method to conduct an empirical analysis of the Chinese-English translation of the internet buzzword “personality collapse,” demonstrating its application and effectiveness in specific translation practices, and emphasizing the value of corpora in addressing the challenges of translating internet buzzwords. Zhang Jingcan (2022) explored the English translation of internet buzzwords from the perspective of ecological translation studies, stressing the importance of analyzing the ecological environment of internet hotwords during the translation process and enhancing translation adaptability, reflecting a shift towards ecological research in translation studies.

Despite the aforementioned studies delving into the translation of internet buzzwords from various theoretical perspectives and research methods, yielding a series of valuable findings, there remains a certain gap in the field of internet buzzwords translation both domestically and internationally. First, most existing research focuses on the application of a single theoretical framework or method, lacking comprehensive interdisciplinary analysis. For instance, while cognitive linguistics and eco-translation theory offer new interpretive paths for translating internet buzzwords, there is a lack of research on how to integrate these theories with intercultural communication theory to more comprehensively understand and address the cultural differences and translation challenges associated with internet buzzwords. Secondly, there are insufficient in-depth analyses and evaluation of the translation practices of internet buzzwords. Although some studies, such as Wang Anmin (2023), have analyzed specific internet buzzwords using corpus methods, they lack an overall assessment of the translation effectiveness and

acceptance of internet buzzwords, as well as an analysis of the adaptability of translation strategies across different cultural contexts. Furthermore, researches on translation strategies for internet buzzwords from a cross-cultural perspective, particularly the selection and application of domestication and foreignization strategies, have been explored by scholars like Liu Peiyao and Wu Yungaowa (2022). However, under the backdrop of multiculturalism, how to balance the localization characteristics of internet buzzwords with the demands of global communication still requires further study.

In summary, researches on the translation of internet buzzwords have made significant progress. However, there are still notable gaps in interdisciplinary comprehensive analysis, in-depth evaluation of translation practices, and the application of translation strategies from a cross-cultural perspective. Future research needs to explore more broadly in theory and methodology to address the cross-cultural translation issues of internet buzzwords more comprehensively, promoting communication and understanding between different cultures.

1. Internet Buzzwords in Cross- cultural Boundaries

In the process of exploring the translation of internet buzzwords, the construction of a theoretical framework is crucial. It not only provides guidance for translation, but also helps to understand the complex phenomena in cross-cultural communication. This section will focus on introducing the application of translation theory and cross-cultural communication theory in the translation of Internet buzzwords. Translation theory provides a multi-dimensional explanatory framework for the translation of Internet buzzwords, among which functionalism and pragmatics are two representative theories.

Functionalism, originating from the Skopos Theory, emphasizes that translation should be guided by the function of the target text. Vermeer (1989) proposed that the Skopos Theory suggests that translation activities should center on the purpose of translation, with the ultimate goal being to enable the target text to fulfill its intended functions in the target language and culture. In the translation of internet buzzwords, this theory guides translators not only to accurately convey the original information but also to consider the cultural background and reception habits of the target audience, ensuring that the translated result has appropriate acceptance and influence in the target culture.

Pragmatics Theory focuses on the context and background of language use, particularly the implicit meanings and social functions of language. Leech's (1983) politeness principle is a key concept in pragmatics theory, emphasizing consideration for the other party's feelings during communication to avoid offense. This is especially important for translating internet buzzwords. Internet buzzwords often carry rich cultural connotations and emotional hues, and pragmatics theory requires translators to fully consider context and cultural differences to achieve appropriateness and politeness in translation.

Cross-cultural communication theory provides a deep cultural perspective for the translation of internet buzzwords, emphasizing the impact of cultural differences on translation practice. Hall's (1976) high-context and low-context cultural theory is a classic in cross-cultural communication theory. It categorizes cultures into high-context and low-context types, where the former conveys most information implicitly

within the context, while the latter expresses information directly through language. In the translation of internet buzzwords, the high-context and low-context cultural theory reminds translators to pay attention to the differences between the source and target cultures, especially when dealing with internet buzzwords rich in cultural metaphors and context-dependent elements. Flexible adjustment of translation strategies is necessary to ensure the accurate transmission of cultural connotations.

Hofstede (1980)'s cultural dimensions theory also provides an important cross-cultural perspective for the translation of internet buzzwords. This theory describes the characteristics of different cultures through six dimensions: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and hedonism. In the process of translating internet buzzwords, translators can use the cultural dimensions theory to deeply analyze the differences between the source and target language cultures, and reasonably choose strategies such as domestication or foreignization to better adapt to the expectations and values of the target culture.

In summary, functionalism and pragmatics theories provide guidance for the translation of internet buzzwords from the perspectives of language and function. Meanwhile, high-low context cultural theory and cultural dimension theory deepen our understanding of internet buzzwords translation from the angle of cultural differences. These theoretical frameworks not only enrich the research dimensions of internet buzzwords translation but also offer valuable guidance and strategies for translation practice, facilitating effective communication and understanding between different cultures.

2. Cross-cultural Translation Strategies of Internet Buzzwords

As a cultural phenomenon, the cross-cultural translation of internet buzzwords is not just a linguistic transformation but also a cultural transmission and re-interpretation. Therefore, the selection of translation strategies is crucial for ensuring the cultural adaptability of the translated text, conveying the cultural characteristics of the original, and resonating with the target readers. In this context, this section will explore the cross-cultural translation strategies for internet buzzwords, including cultural adaptability, creative translation, and an in-depth understanding of these strategies through case analysis.

2.1 Cultural Adaptability

In the cross-cultural translation of internet buzzwords, the challenge of cultural adaptation typically manifests in two aspects: first, how to convey unique cultural elements and emotions from the source culture; second, how to ensure that these elements are effectively understood and accepted in the target culture. For example, the Chinese internet phrase “山穷水尽疑无路，柳暗花明又一村” borrows imageries from classical literature to describe a situation where hope is found amidst despair. Directly translating it into English might fail to fully capture its cultural connotations and emotional nuances. In such cases, translators can use analogical methods, opting for expressions with similar cultural imagery in English, such as quoting the English proverb “Every cloud has a silver lining” (there is light at the end of the tunnel), to achieve cultural equivalence and emotional resonance.

2.2 Creative Translation

The translation of internet buzzwords often requires creative strategies, such as free translation and localization. These strategies can make the translation more vivid and closer to the target culture's context. Free translation involves making moderate adjustments to language forms while retaining the main idea of the original text. It is an effective method for handling expressions with specific cultural backgrounds and emotional connotations in internet buzzwords. For example, the Chinese buzzwords term “给力” originally means something or an action that is inspiring or satisfying. Directly translating it as “give power” might fail to accurately convey its emotional tone and context in Chinese. By using the free translation strategy, it can be translated as “empowering” or “inspiring,” which not only preserves the original emotion but also makes the translation more in line with English expression habits, making it easier for the target readers to understand and accept. Localization strategies involve adjusting the translation to fully meet the expectations of the target culture, even including the replacement of specific cultural elements, thereby enhancing the readability and appeal of the translation. This strategy is particularly important when translating internet buzzwords with strong regional characteristics. For instance, the internet buzzwords term “土味情话” refers to expressions that are culturally distinctive and seem vulgar but are full of emotion. Directly translating it as “earthy love words” might fail to convey its unique humor and cultural significance. Through localization strategies, it can be translated as “cheesy pick-up lines,” which not only conveys the original's humor and emotion but also makes the translation more fitting to the English cultural background.

In order to have a deeper understanding of the application of cross-cultural translation strategies, the following analysis is made through several typical cases of Internet buzzwords:

Case One: “人设崩塌”. This popular term originally referred to the stark contrast between someone's public image and private behavior. When translated into English, “Image Collapse” may fail to fully convey its meaning, whereas using “Public Persona Crumbles” better highlights the disparity between public image and personal authenticity, demonstrating the application of interpretive translation strategies. Case Two: “吃瓜群众”. This Chinese term refers to those onlookers who are curious about gossip news. Directly translating it as “Melon-eating Crowd” might sound obscure and difficult to understand, while using “Popcorn Munchers” for localization can more accurately convey the casual attitude of watching and enjoying events, resonating well within English-speaking cultures. Case Three: “斗图”. This term refers to expressing emotions or opinions through sending emoticons in online conversations. Directly translating it as “Fight with Pictures” lacks cultural resonance, whereas using “Meme Battle” retains the original meaning while adapting to the expression style of English internet culture.

The above case analyses show that whether using free translation or localization strategies, the cross-cultural translation of internet buzzwords requires creatively considering how to maintain the cultural characteristics of the source language while ensuring the naturalness and appeal of the translation in the target culture. It not only demands that translators possess high-level language skills and profound

cultural understanding but also requires an accurate grasp of the psychological needs of readers in the target culture. In this way, the translation of internet buzzwords can overcome cultural barriers, promoting communication and understanding between different cultures.

3. Challenges and Countermeasures

Internet buzzwords, as a unique cultural phenomenon, face multiple challenges in cross-cultural translation. These challenges not only involve the difficulty of language itself but also contains deeper cultural differences and contextual understanding. To effectively address these challenges, a series of strategies need to be adopted to enhance the accuracy and cultural adaptability of translations. Here are some potential challenges.

3.1 Semantic Ambiguity and Polysemy

Internet buzzwords often has ambiguous and polysemous characteristics. Its meaning is not fixed but changes with the context and usage scenario. This semantic uncertainty poses significant challenges for translation, as it is difficult to find a word or phrase in the target language that perfectly corresponds and accurately conveys the original meaning. For example, “打 call” originally referred to the spontaneous behavior of audience members at concerts who followed the rhythm of music and interact with performers on stage using glow sticks or other luminous props; later, it evolved into an expression of support, encouragement, and admiration for someone or something in online contexts. A simple literal translation as “make a phone call” would lead readers in the target language to completely misunderstand its meaning.

3.2 Cultural Differences

Internet buzzwords are often rich in local cultural characteristics and social sentiments. These elements can be understood and perceived very differently across various cultural backgrounds. At the same time, some cultural images conveyed by certain Internet buzzwords may not exist in other cultures, or they exist but have different connotations and symbolic meanings. This makes it difficult to find a completely matching cultural image in the translation process, thus affecting the accuracy and effect of the translation. For example, “江湖” in Chinese culture is a concept rich with cultural connotations. It can refer to the real-world “江湖” society or symbolize a life state characterized by freedom, boldness, and a mix of love and hate. However, there is no exact equivalent concept in Western culture. Simply translating it as “rivers and lakes” would fail to convey its deeper cultural imagery. Cultural differences pose one of the greatest challenges in translating internet buzzwords. The key challenge for translators is how to accurately convey the cultural connotations of the original text, ensuring that it remains appealing and engaging in the target culture.

3.3 Contextual Understanding

The meaning of internet buzzwords often heavily relies on specific contexts. Without the concrete context, its meaning may become vague or even completely altered. In cross-cultural translation, due to the

different contexts of the original text and the target text, translators will find it difficult to accurately grasp the precise meaning of the original buzzwords in a specific context, leading to translation errors. The creation and popularity of internet buzzwords are often closely related to specific social events, online memes, or public sentiment. This requires translators not only to be proficient in language but also to have a deep understanding of the relevant socio-cultural background. Without an accurate grasp of the original context, effective translation will be difficult to achieve.

In order to effectively respond to the above challenges, the following strategies are proposed:

- 1) Strengthening translators' intercultural awareness: translators should continuously improve their intercultural communication skills by studying and researching the cultures of both source and target languages, enhancing sensitivity to cultural differences. This not only involves broad social and cultural knowledge but also keeps up with the latest trends in online culture to better understand and translate internet buzzwords.
- 2) Using multimedia to assist translation: in the process of translating internet buzzwords, multimedia materials such as videos and images can be utilized as aids to help translators better understand the context and cultural background of the original text. At the same time, these multimedia elements can also serve as part of the translation, combining with textual translation to enhance the vividness and readability of the final text.
- 3) Adopting Creative Translation Strategies: when translating internet buzzwords, traditional literal translation often fails to achieve the desired effect. Translators should employ more flexible and creative strategies, such as free translation or localization, to ensure that the translation is both faithful to the original meaning and suitable for the target culture's reception habits. When necessary, they can even create new expressions to convey the cultural connotations and emotional nuances of the original text.
- 4) Enhancing Target Reader Engagement: in certain situations, directly explaining the cultural significance and context behind internet buzzwords to target readers can serve as an effective translation strategy. By providing annotations, footnotes, or additional explanations, it helps readers understand the deeper meanings of internet buzzwords, thereby enhancing the acceptability and interactivity of the translation.

In conclusion, the cross-cultural translation of internet buzzwords is a complex and challenging process. It requires translators not only to possess excellent language skills but also to have cross-cultural communication abilities, creative thinking, and multimedia application capabilities. By implementing the aforementioned strategies, challenges encountered during the translation process can be effectively addressed, ensuring the effective transmission of internet buzzwords and cultural exchange.

4. Conclusion

This study delves into the cross-cultural translation strategies of internet buzzwords, exploring how to preserve the cultural characteristics of the source language while adapting the translation to meet the challenges of the target culture. The study finds that cultural adaptability and creative translation are key

to effective translation, with a deep understanding of internet buzzwords and enhanced cross-cultural awareness being essential elements in the translation process. Furthermore, through case analysis, this study further validates the practicality and effectiveness of strategies such as free translation and localization in the translation of internet buzzwords. Research shows that internet buzzwords, as a cultural carrier, not only facilitates the exchange and dissemination of culture through cross-cultural translation but also enhances understanding and recognition among people from different cultural backgrounds. This study provides guidance for the cross-cultural translation practice of internet buzzwords by proposing specific translation strategies and methods, which is of significant theoretical and practical importance for promoting cultural exchange in a globalized context. At the same time, the findings of this study offer new perspectives to translators and practitioners, encouraging them to adopt more flexible and creative approaches in translating internet buzzwords to better address the challenges posed by cultural differences.

Looking ahead, as globalization deepens and online culture continues to evolve, internet buzzwords will continue to emerge, and the complexity and challenges of their cross-cultural translation will further increase. Therefore, future research needs to delve into several areas. First, intensify studies on methods for handling cultural differences in the cross-cultural translation of internet buzzwords, exploring more effective strategies for cultural adaptation. Second, leverage modern technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data analysis to enhance the efficiency and accuracy of translating internet buzzwords. Finally, strengthen interdisciplinary research by applying findings from translation studies, cultural studies, sociology, and other fields to the cross-cultural translation of internet buzzwords, promoting mutual enhancement and development between theory and practice.

In conclusion, the cross-cultural translation of internet buzzwords is a complex yet productive endeavor. It not only facilitates communication and understanding between different cultures but also enriches the research content of translation theory and practice. Through continuous exploration and practice, it is hopeful to promote more harmonious cross-cultural exchanges in the context of globalization.

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