

Original Paper

Research on the English Translation Standards of Foshan Cantonese Opera Classics

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Abstract

As the birthplace of Cantonese opera, Foshan takes the lead in the inheritance, protection, and development of Cantonese opera. Foshan has invested heavily in the development, inheritance, and promotion of Cantonese opera, and has made great efforts. Nowadays, Cantonese opera is flourishing in various organizational forms in the settlements of overseas Chinese around the world, and is very popular among local Chinese and foreign people. Foshan Cantonese opera needs to vigorously promote the translation and dissemination of Cantonese opera to the outside world. In the translation of Foshan Cantonese opera classics, translators should take "conveying essence and meaning" as the overall guiding principle.

Key words

Foshan Cantonese Opera, classics, English translation, standards

1. Introduction

Cantonese opera was listed in the first batch of 518 national intangible cultural heritage items announced on May 20, 2006. On September 30, 2009, Cantonese opera was recognized by UNESCO and included in the list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity. Foshan is the birthplace of Cantonese opera. Foshan Cantonese Opera is an ancient traditional opera genre. It emerged during the Jiajing period of the Ming Dynasty and is a performing art form. After hundreds of years of integration, it has become one of the important traditional Chinese theatrical genres that has been passed down on five continents. Cantonese opera, known as the "Southern Red Bean", is a representative of Lingnan traditional culture and a shining pearl in Chinese opera art. It is mainly popular in urban and rural areas of Guangdong Province, southern Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Hong Kong region Special Administrative Region, Macao region Special Administrative Region and other regions where

Cantonese dialect is spoken. Foshan is known as the "cradle of Cantonese opera", with a profound cultural heritage of Cantonese opera and profound cultural symbols and historical characteristics. Ma Shizeng, Qian liju, Xue Juexian and other Cantonese opera masters have opened up different schools of Cantonese opera singing, and Zeng Xiaomin, Li Shuqin and others have become the backbone of Cantonese opera performances today. To this day, Foshan Cantonese opera continues to be heard and passed down from generation to generation.

Cantonese opera, as an important and influential local opera, presents strong local characteristics in opera music, singing style, use of musical instruments, performance, and folk customs, and has distinct characteristics of Lingnan culture. It is a mirror reflecting the folk customs, ethnic memories, and ways of thinking of the people of Foshan, and an outstanding representative of Foshan's traditional folk art. Studying and protecting Foshan Cantonese opera is not only about preserving the art of Cantonese opera, but also about better safeguarding the spiritual home of the people of Foshan.

2. The Protection and Development of Foshan Cantonese Opera

Studying and protecting Foshan Cantonese opera is not only about preserving the art of Cantonese opera, but also about better safeguarding the spiritual home of the people of Foshan.

As the cradle of Cantonese opera, Foshan is a region rich in opera culture. Foshan people are fond of Cantonese opera, and regardless of age, they can hum a few lines. Cantonese opera has a history of over a hundred years in Foshan. The Foshan community loves Cantonese opera, which preserves ancient and traditional theatrical culture as well as rich traditional customs. However, due to the increasing impact of the commercial wave, the survival and development of Foshan Cantonese Opera Troupe are facing great challenges. Like many local operas, performance groups are generally in a slump, with a lack of successors on stage and a shortage of talented performers. The ecological environment for Cantonese opera performances is becoming increasingly severe, with narrow distribution areas, declining audience numbers, and a sharp decrease in the number of opera troupes. Regardless of the number of troupes, performance times, Cantonese opera actors, Cantonese opera audiences, etc., Cantonese opera is facing a severe situation. Due to the accelerating pace of modernization, traditional theatrical culture is rapidly disappearing. So now it is very important and urgent to record and study the artistic form and folk customs of Foshan Cantonese opera, to understand and investigate the ecological status of the survival and development of Foshan Cantonese opera, and to study and analyze effective measures for external translation and introduction.

Originating from Foshan, Guangdong Cantonese opera, as an important local theatrical genre, carries the cultural traditions and humanistic spirit of the people for hundreds or even thousands of years. It has a wide influence in Guangdong, Hong Kong region, Macao region, Southeast Asia, the United States, and Europe, and has numerous untapped spiritual values, ways of thinking, and cultural awareness, waiting for us to protect and study, inherit and promote.

As a world cultural heritage, Cantonese opera has a very high reputation both domestically and

internationally, and is a landmark cultural brand in the cultural construction. The protection and development of Cantonese opera is a systematic project that requires preparation and accumulation in various aspects such as talent cultivation, inheritance and innovation of traditional opera genres, excavation and protection of endangered opera genres, research and development of Cantonese opera customs, cultivation of Cantonese opera audiences, and overseas dissemination of Cantonese opera. As the birthplace of Cantonese opera, Foshan should take the lead in the inheritance, protection, and development of Cantonese opera. Over the years, Foshan has invested heavily in the development, inheritance, and promotion of Cantonese opera, making many efforts and innovative measures. The Foshan Cantonese Opera Theatre, with a total investment of 350 million yuan, is expected to be put into use by the end of the year and become a new cultural landmark in Foshan; Foshan Cantonese Opera Training Institute undertakes the evaluation of Foshan Cantonese Opera Characteristic Schools; During the Spring Festival each year, a special performance of Cantonese opera and opera excerpts is held at Wanfu Terrace in Foshan Ancestral Temple; Cantonese opera has become a compulsory course in schools; CCTV-11 Opera Channel specially recorded and broadcast "Journey to the Hometown of Opera, Foshan, the Hometown of Cantonese Opera".

3. Overseas Dissemination and Exchange of Foshan Cantonese Opera

Foshan Cantonese opera has very unique artistic characteristics and charm, which have a wide and strong appeal to lovers of drama art and Chinese culture from all over the world. Only what belongs to the nation is what belongs to the world. For people from all over the world, the charm of Cantonese opera art lies in its uniqueness and ethnicity.

In addition to its popularity in Guangdong, Guangxi, Hong Kong region, and Macao region, there are also places around the world where overseas Chinese from Guangdong have settled, and its singing and dancing performances have been or still are present today. As early as the reign of Emperor Xianfeng and Emperor Tongzhi, Cantonese opera troupes had already left the country and appeared on the land of Southeast Asia, America, and Europe. Nowadays, Cantonese opera is flourishing in various organizational forms in the settlements of overseas Chinese around the world, and is very popular among local Chinese and foreign people. Cantonese opera has the sociality of cultural identity among the masses and has become a cultural bond between Chinese speakers of Cantonese as their mother tongue. Early Cantonese opera artists immigrated to various parts of the world, bringing Cantonese opera culture to all directions, especially in Southeast Asia where there were generations of artists, fixed troupe organizations, industry associations, and traditional performance venues. Therefore, compared with other local operas in China, Cantonese opera has more practical and opportunities for foreign exchange performances. In terms of foreign performances and dissemination, Cantonese opera has always been at the forefront of the country.

There are three ways to protect intangible cultural heritage: one is to remember, integrate it into history courses, and record it using modern means; The second is inheritance, encouraging inheritance and

allowing cultural heritage to continue in a dynamic way; The third is to spread it abroad through translation, expanding its influence and popularity. From this, it can be seen that external translation is one of the most important means to protect and inherit the intangible cultural heritage of Cantonese opera art.

As one of the most representative traditional Chinese arts in intangible cultural heritage, Foshan Cantonese opera not only needs to carry out the inheritance and development of Cantonese opera art locally, but also needs to vigorously promote the translation and dissemination of Cantonese opera to the outside world, truly and fully demonstrate the artistic achievements and charm of Cantonese opera art, so as to better promote Cantonese opera art to the world, demonstrate cultural confidence, and promote cultural exchanges and friendship between China and foreign countries.

The translation and dissemination of Cantonese opera is a very complex and tortuous process, and the biggest problem currently faced is that there is a huge development bottleneck in the process of translating, introducing, and disseminating Cantonese opera to the outside world, that is, there are serious deficiencies in both quality and quantity dimensions of Cantonese opera translation. Therefore, this project conducts a survey on the translation of Cantonese opera, with the aim of improving the translation and introduction of Cantonese opera, and promoting its external dissemination and exchange.

4. English Translation Standards of Foshan Cantonese Opera Classics

It is imperative to translate Foshan's classic Cantonese operas into English. The study of classical translation has not only attracted attention in China, but also in foreign countries. Translation and the Classic published by Oxford University Press in 2008 is a typical example with great reference value. Lawrence Venuti writes in the book:

"Even the most cursory reading of publishers' catalogues confirms that the foreign-language texts we call 'classics' do not merely attract translation, but eventually, when their copyright expires, become subject to multiple retranslations, as publishers scramble to transform the cultural capital those texts have acquired into economic capital. Nonetheless, it can be argued that translation functions as one cultural practice through which a foreign text attains the status of a classic: the very fact of translation not only implies that the text has been judged valuable enough to bring into another culture, but also increases this value by generating much promotional devices as jacket copy, endorsements, and advertisements and by enabling such diverse modes of reception as reviews, course adoptions, and scholarly research. 'Classical masterpieces', Maurice Blanchot shrewdly observed, 'live only in translation.'" (Wang, 2010, pp. i-ii)

The translation of Foshan Cantonese opera into English has high research value, but related research is still weak. No one has conducted in-depth research on the translation of Foshan Cantonese opera into English before, and this research has significant practical significance. The translation of Foshan Cantonese opera into English is of great significance for the external dissemination of Foshan

Cantonese opera.

4.1 English Cantonese Opera in Foshan

The localization transformation of Cantonese opera in Foshan is very effective. Cantonese opera artists boldly attempt cross-border and cross language performances, such as performing Cantonese opera in English and Malay, forming unique English Cantonese opera and Malay Cantonese opera. English Cantonese opera is an innovative derivative phenomenon unique to Cantonese opera compared to other domestic genres, reflecting its global nature and exerting a certain influence both domestically and internationally. It has played an important role in the promotion of Cantonese opera. English Cantonese Opera, also known as English Gong and Drum Opera or English Gong and Drum Cantonese Opera, is performed and recited in English. The music uses Cantonese opera's banghuang and ditties, as well as new tunes, accompanied by gongs and drums. The stage scenes, presentation, body movements, costumes, makeup, etc. are all completely in accordance with Cantonese Opera. Hong Kong region has had English Cantonese opera performances since 1947, which are highly popular among foreign audiences. Since entering the 21st century, English Cantonese opera has not disappeared, but has further developed. Foshan has a full performance of the English Cantonese opera. The Guangdong Red Bean Cantonese Opera Troupe once went to Singapore to promote Cantonese opera Imperial Court in English. The Guangdong Foshan Cantonese Opera Museum also held an "English Cantonese Opera Seminar". The biggest feature of English Cantonese opera is singing Cantonese opera in English while retaining a strong Cantonese opera flavor. Based on the stories and plots of some historical figures, a humorous and concise plot is composed, referencing Cantonese opera, movie theme songs, and popular songs of the times. The lyrics are written in humorous and harmonious English, and then combined with Cantonese opera program performances. The stage effect is harmonious, interesting, and pleasing to the eye.

Foshan English Cantonese Opera can enable foreigners to directly understand Foshan culture and appreciate Foshan opera art, thus effectively promoting the spread and exchange of Foshan Cantonese Opera in the world. Foshan English Cantonese Opera has made bold attempts in performance and achieved remarkable results, but in recent years, it has become much quieter in terms of external dissemination and translation.

4.2 English Translation Standards of Foshan Cantonese Opera Classics

It is necessary to establish a relatively unified standard to ensure the translation standards of Foshan Cantonese opera classics.

Drama is an art form that combines music and lyrics. Drama lyrics, like the rhythm of words, are generally a poetic style that emphasizes the use of level and oblique tones, rhythm, a consistent rhyme, and a limited number of words and sentences. The language used reflects a personalized style, while also expressing both narrative and lyrical elements. Combined with movements and plot, they are well suited for stage performances. (Wang, 2007, p. 299)

The form of drama is based on the customs and habits of ethnic life, and is formed through the use of

dialect slang in the local language. The melody is a typical form of ethnic music, which, combined with the formatting and channeling of ethnic emotions, allows for easy recitation and singing. Therefore, the translation of drama requires higher language arts and deeper cultural understanding, as well as more cross-cultural communication and creativity, and more empathetic understanding and emotional expression. The grasp of character identity and personality, as well as the coordination of psychology, language, and action styles in this context, are all areas that should be noted when creating and translating. Not to mention the comprehensive consideration of ethnic theatrical traditions in terms of costumes, props, lighting, scenery, performance, stage effects, audience reactions, etc. - because drama is strictly a comprehensive art, how can its translation not consider comprehensive effects? (Wang, 2007, p. 7)

Cantonese opera groups often provide both Chinese and English subtitles when performing Cantonese opera abroad, making it easier for foreign audiences to understand the plot and have their own unique experience and tradition in enhancing the dissemination effect. How to better translate Cantonese opera Chinese subtitles into English subtitles? Cantonese opera subtitles are different from literary translations of dramas and legendary scripts. The translation purpose is mainly not for reading, but for performance and external communication.

For the singing feature of traditional drama, the translation of lines often cannot sing well, but is transformed into a source of stage subtitles, becoming a visual reading art. In this regard, the matching of actors' lip movements and the tacit understanding with their actions during dubbing, as well as the duration of their speech, have become at least an issue that cannot be overlooked. (Wang, 2007, p. 7)

There are numerous translation theories in Western modern and contemporary times, and there is no unified view on the standards of translation. However, when Chinese people talk about translation, they often mention Yan Fu's concepts of faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance. Faithfulness refers to being faithful to the original content, being able to correctly understand the original text and accurately express its meaning, while expressiveness refers to the translation being fluent, easy to understand, and authentic. Elegance refers to the elegance of words. Yan Fu's concept of elegance does not refer to refinement, or the use of vulgar language, coarse language, or plain language, but rather to translating Western academic works in Chinese before the Qin and Han dynasties. The most basic requirement for translation is to be faithful and fluent. (Chen, 2014, p. 2)

Essentially, translation is a communicative event that involves the original text, the original author, the translated text, the translator, and the reader of the translated text. Therefore, translation is both a product and a process, involving different translation strategies, methods, and techniques (Si, 2017, p. 1). Translation techniques can generally be divided into three categories: word translation techniques, sentence translation techniques, and discourse translation techniques. Among them, word translation techniques include word class conversion, word addition, and word subtraction. Sentence translation techniques include sub-translation, co-translation, forward translation, reverse translation, word order transformation, tense transformation, and perspective transformation. Discourse translation techniques

mainly involve cohesion issues, including the cohesion between sentence components and the cohesion between sentences. In the practice of translating Foshan's classic Cantonese operas into English, translation methods and techniques should be flexibly applied according to the actual context to accurately and smoothly convey the essence of Foshan's classic Cantonese operas to the target readers, arouse their interest in Foshan's excellent culture, and deepen their understanding and love for It.

In the translation of Foshan Cantonese opera classics, translators should pay special attention to equivalence. Eugene Nida proposes "dynamic equivalence", which means "stimulating an effect in the reader of the translation similar to that caused in the reader of the original" (Hickey, 1998, p. 2).

Mr. Wang Rongpei, a famous translation theorist in China, proposed the standard of "conveying essence and meaning" in the English translation of Chinese classics. Later, "conveying essence and meaning" was taken as the overall guiding principle of the book *English Translation of Chinese Classics*. This translation principle conforms to Aristotle's "imitation theory" and has theoretical guidance value for the translation of Chinese classics. In the measurement and evaluation of the quality of the translation of Foshan Cantonese opera classics, using "conveying essence and meaning" as the guiding principle and evaluation standard is of great significance.

5. Conclusion

In order to deepen the understanding of Foshan culture among countries around the world, it is imperative to further promote the protection and dissemination of Foshan Cantonese Opera. The English translation of Foshan Cantonese Opera classics is a very important way to spread Foshan Cantonese Opera classics. Translation involves the reproduction of the closest natural equivalent of the Source Text message in terms of both meaning and style. The principle of "conveying essence and meaning" proposed by the famous translation theorist Mr. Wang Rongpei is a very important translation standard for the English translation of the classic Cantonese operas of Foshan.

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