

BOOK REVIEW

Terminology Translation in Chinese Contexts: Theory and Practice

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Yanxia Yang

Nanjing Agricultural University, Nanjing, China
Nanjing University, Nanjing, China
Email: yanxiayang3790@163.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5543-0065>

Yang Wang

Nanjing Agricultural University, Nanjing, China
Email: 2021815048@stu.njau.edu.cn
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-4123-3249>

The world is witnessing a flourishing cross-cultural symbiosis, where highly frequent cultural exchanges and cooperation take place among different cultural communities. Traditional Chinese culture is profound and is getting increasingly popular in many parts of the world. It is worth noting that information exchanges can facilitate cultural understandings, while cultural differences, if not communicated properly, may hinder such exchanges and lead to misunderstandings or even conflicts. Specifically, terms related to culture are complex and discipline-specific as they represent an amalgam of inherited ancestral practices unique to a particular culture. This presents great challenges for translators. According to Wei (2018), the cultural functions that terminology fulfills and the intrinsic difficulties that arise in translating such terms are worth investigating. In light of the significance of terminology translation, a comprehensive academic collection is needed to address the topic from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

Terminology Translation in Chinese Contexts: Theory and Practice was edited by Saihong Li and William Hope. This collection “encompasses scholarly works on every possible translation activity and theory involving the use of Chinese language” (p.2). The exploration of traditional Chinese culture, such as the Peking opera and traditional Chinese medicine, is essential to establish the Chinese culture paradigms against the backdrop of culturally diverse international societies. In addition, language service markets around the world have dramatically changed along with the technology development. Terminology management has become an important part of the workflow of translation. Discussions on terminology management in the Chinese context may offer solutions for practitioners around the world. In all respects, this collection provides insightful views on terminology translation, covering topics from terminology translation in the fields of law, arts, religion, food and Chinese medicine to



terminology management in the language service industry with new technologies, such as big data, cloud computing and artificial intelligence.

The volume consists of two parts, terminology translation and terminology management from theory to practice. It opens with an informative and well-crafted introduction, briefly presenting a picture of terminology translation of Chinese contemporary identities and culture. In addition to the introduction, the volume includes 12 chapters.

Part I Terminology translation, consisting of the first six chapters, aims to introduce the state of the art and challenges of terminology translation within the Chinese context. At the very beginning, a thorough and well-organized introduction to the history and development of Chinese terminology is presented by Zhiwei Feng. The introduction aims to examine the nature and impact of the unique process, which has resulted in the inherent characteristics of modern Chinese terms through historical and cultural development. In Chapter 1, Le Cheng and Yuxiu Sun believe that legal terminology is not only the representation of legal denotation and connotation but also a carrier of relevant socio-legal contexts. The transfer of legal terms among different systems is the process of meaning construction and reconstruction within socio-legal contexts. The process of legal terminology translation includes three steps: delimitating a legal term, understanding a legal term, and translating a legal term. Two case studies are presented to explain the legal terminology translation process based on a corpus approach. The authors claim that “legal terms are tied to socio-legal contexts rather than to language” (p.38). Chapter 2, contributed by Xiaochen Zhang, exemplifies the reasons why Chinese company rules are weakly enforced in practice from a historical perspective. Terminology translation of “gōngsī” is adopted as an example, which illustrates how political concerns bring selective transplantation of basic company law concepts. Attention should, therefore, be paid to the translation of these two concepts. State-owned ones are supposed to translate as enterprises while privately owned ones are translated as companies. Chapter 3 by Binhua Wang, focuses on the translation of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) terminology. “TCM explains health and diseases from a macro, systemic, and holistic perspective” (p.53) and is considered to be one of the top elements that best represent Chinese culture. Wang discusses the dissemination of TCM culture in the UK and underscores the importance of its translation. Due to the differences between Chinese culture and Western culture, TCM terminology translation should be considered as both technical translation and cultural translation and “a comprehensive understanding of classical Chinese language and culture, as well as clinical Chinese medicine, is required for a translator to provide a thorough translation” (p.64). Chapter 4 is related to religious terminology. In this chapter, Jenny Wong expounds on the translatability and untranslatability of religious terminology from a hermeneutics perspective. She proposes to redefine the scope of religion into seven dimensions: an ethical and legal dimension, a doctrinal and philosophical dimension, a social and institutional dimension, a practical and ritual dimension, an experiential and emotional dimension, a narrative and mythic dimension, and a material dimension. Wong argues that religious language has different degrees of translatability and is no longer a “term question” when broken down into different dimensions. Chapter 5 by Saihong Li zooms in on food terminology translation. Three case studies are used to discuss the translation approaches of food-related terminology. The author highlights that the challenges associated with food terminology translation extend beyond selecting precise terms and encompass the inconsistencies and mistranslations of names,



which greatly impede global communication. Consequently, there is a necessity to establish a systematic standardization of food terminology. Chapter 6 focuses on the translation of Peking opera terminology. In this chapter, Qin Huang and Yajun Wang conduct an in-depth analysis of the translation of Peking Opera terminology based on visual grammar approach. Representation, interaction and composition are examined to clarify the multimodal feature of Peking Opera terms translation. This study opens an avenue for future studies on the translation of terminology through expounding the multimodal devices in the translation process of Peking Opera terms.

Part II is on terminology management and scholarship, consisting of the other six chapters. Similarly, this part begins with an introduction by Saihong Li and William Hope. The introduction presents an overview of the history of terminology management and scholarship. Li and Hope carefully comb through the research on the development of contemporary Chinese terminology management and divide it into five stages: the initial stage, the stagnation stage, the exploration stage, the development stage, and the boom stage, which “shed further light on this dual reality that characterizes contemporary terminology management and scholarship in Chinese contexts” (p.128). Following the introduction, Chapter 7 by Bingbing Leng points to the growing importance of terminology management. Meanwhile, the contributor argues that it is necessary to re-examine the existing terminology theories. She points out the limitations of the General Theory of Terminology, indicating that this theory cannot provide adequate guidance for translator-oriented terminology management. Moreover, she proposes that the Communicative Theory of Terminology can be employed as an appropriate theoretical framework for term identification and translation. Chapter 8 by Jian Yin focuses on the terminology definition in the humanities and social sciences. The author believes that terminology contains both intensive and extensive definitions, and defines terminology into three levels: the theoretical level, the domain-specific level, and the sample level. The intensive dimension includes both the theoretical definition and the domain-specific definition, and the extensive dimension is the sample definition. The proposed multi-level definition model of terminology could “deepen our understanding of terminology and facilitate its application” (p.163). Chapter 9 describes a project for automatically compiling bilingual legal glossaries based on Chinese-English parallel corpora. In this chapter, Zhaoming Gao adopts the natural language processing and machine translation to automatically compile Chinese-English bilingual glossaries in the field of law. A hybrid approach combining linguistic and statistical methods is suggested as an appropriate direction for bilingual terminology identification. In Chapter 10, Huashu Wang and Zhi Li investigate the terminology management in China’s language service industry from the macro and micro perspectives. The investigation covers terminology management awareness, data management processes, terminology tool applications, and terminology management training. Drawing from the survey results, they outline the existing problems and offer constructive countermeasures “from the perspectives of terminology management understanding, standardization, technologies, and talent cultivation” (p.198). Chapter 11 focuses on translationese and translation universals. In this chapter, Xiaolin Yang and Dechao Li believe that translationese is a continuum between source language interference and translation universals, while translation universals are contained in translationese. They consider that great emphasis should be placed on exploring concepts. “Translationese is a common tendency of human thought processes during language conversion rather than a common tendency of human language” (p.212). This study



offers theoretical implications for translators and professionals engaged in Chinese-English translating work. Chapter 12 by Wen Zhao, Xingye Su and Weizu Huang describes the process of creating a vocabulary database based on the oral literature tradition of Manchu *Ulabun*. The database, as a valuable practical resource, complements the broad work of institutions such as the Institute of Ethnic Literature. This terminology database plays a crucial role in protecting cultural heritage and disseminating the cultural heritage internationally. They claim that “minority cultures rarely survive in a state of stasis, and therefore term databases such as these have an important function in disseminating unique work such as the *Ulabun* heritage to create cultural and academic synergies with other traditions nationally and internationally” (p.16).

Overall, this volume provides a thorough and comprehensive view of terminology translation, terminology management and scholarship in the Chinese context. Each part concerns self-contained topics and they aim to shift the attention of translators, instructors and academics from general terminology translation to the unique Chinese cultural heritage. According to Wang (2018), translation plays an essential role in exporting Chinese culture and philosophy to the global community. This has highlighted the importance of maintaining quality and consistency in terminology management. As terms normally depend on the social context in which they are used (Gambier, 2009), understanding terms is a means of gaining insight into the societal aspects of a culture. In this regard, this volume represents a highly praiseworthy endeavor in providing a broad and in-depth view of terminology translation and also on its development of the elements of Chinese culture. It can help readers develop a better understanding of the unique values, beliefs and customs that shape Chinese society.

Translating terms related to Chinese culture across various disciplines often entails significant connotations and social implications, consequently presenting a substantial challenge for translators. Hence, there is a need to direct research towards developing effective strategies for culturally loaded terms. In this sense, there is potential to undertake more empirical studies on term translation with different research tools. For example, eye-tracking and key-logging tools can be used to detect the translation process, which will provide more information and understanding of terminology translation in future studies. In addition, viewing translation in relation to hermeneutics highlights the contiguity of translating as the negotiation of difference (Hermans, 2019). Hermeneutics is tackling the conditions of understanding and the personal act of comprehension (Stolze, 2010). As noted, the translatability and untranslatability of religious terms is not only a linguistic and semantic issue but an ideological and cultural one (p.79), therefore, interpreting these terms may result in different orientations and generate different subjective effects on the translation work as the result of individual cultural and ideological backgrounds of translators.

Altogether, this volume approaches terminology translation, terminology management and scholarship from a creative and brand-new perspective, aiming to help readers understand China and its unique culture more profoundly. Therefore, the book is worth reading, especially for researchers and academics who are interested in terminology translation, terminology management and Chinese culture.



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About the Authors:

Yanxia Yang currently works as an associate professor at Nanjing Agricultural University (Nanjing, China) and a postdoctoral researcher at Nanjing University (Nanjing, China). Her research interests include translator education, translation technology and terminology translation.

Yang Wang is an MTI student at Nanjing Agricultural University. Her research interests include translation theory and practice.

