

Study of Sports Translation from the Perspective of Functional Equivalence

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ABSTRACT

With people's continuous pursuit of a better life, sports has been thriving in the whole world, becoming an important way for people to enhance their physical fitness and improve their health. Secondly, in the frequent communication and collision of world civilizations, sports has been a good way to alleviate cultural conflicts. However, sports spread across international communication, involving language transition and translation. In the translation practice, the orientations of value and the choices of strategy for sports are playing significant roles in the further development of sports in the globe. Yet there are only a few sports translation researches currently, so the research of translation strategy, method, orientation, paradigm, evaluation framework is still a huge blank that needs to be filled. This paper focuses on the translation of sports terms, on the basis of Nida's functional theory of equivalence, tries to establish a benign understanding bridge between the target-text readers and the original-text readers, improve the consistency of their acceptance effect, and promote the development of sports and cultural communication.

KEYWORDS

Sports; Sports Translation; Cross-civilization; Dynamic Equivalence; Functional Equivalence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sports is the eternal theme in daily life, and also a symbol of social civilization. At the same time, with the economic development of China, China's sports events are booming, especially after the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. More and more attention has been paid to sports undertakings nowadays. Consequently, sports English enjoys great importance in information transmission and the study of sports English is all the more necessary. With the thriving development of sports matches at home and abroad as well as the continuous increase in international sports communication, especially the Olympics and World Cup as well as Championship, more and more people begin to pay attention to sports. All kinds of newspapers and magazines as well as TV channels and other mass media continue to introduce the development of world sports to people all over the world. Under such circumstances, sports English terms have appeared accordingly and play a role in sports career and cultural communication between China and the west. Since the Beijing Olympics, various kinds of sports games and sports items have appeared in media, such as BBC, China Daily as well as CCTV5. This leads to many English learners and sports fans to analyze and master the sports English terms characteristics and explore its translation skills and methods will be of great significance for the development of domestic sports career and its cross-cultural communication in the field of sports. However, in the realization of cross-cultural exchange in sports, how to contain more civilizations and seek common identity with reserving differences can not only recognize the basic values of world civilization, but also need to retain the characteristics of various civilizations and give different

civilizations space for exchange and development, which depends on the choice of translation concepts and means of sports. A good translation theory can better guide the process of sports translation. This paper chooses the functional equivalence theory as the framework to study and comment on the current sports translation, so as to promote the exchange of civilizations and give full play to the value potential of sports.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Features of Sports English

Generally speaking, there are two main features of sports English. It can be known as lexical features and grammatical features.

2.1.1. Lexical Features of Sports English

English sport terms are vivid, interesting and lively. For instance, in tennis match, love is used to mean zero, and love game means the opponent gets no scores at all. Fifteen love means 15:0, love all means 0:0.

In addition, English sport terms include rich compound words. For example, play-off means the final match. Time-out means the match is suspended. Come-back means to retrieve defeat. Sports English terms are short and concise. Time limitation of sports match requests sports English terms to be short but precise. For example, touch. You touched the ball is right in grammar, but in sports match, no one would say so. There are many other examples, such as side out; bad; pass, and so on.

Sports English terms are unique. For instance, in sports English terms, second means assistance. Service means to serve a ball. Even means the same accumulated scores. Meanwhile, English sport terms include concise words which seems to be simple but professional in essence. For instance, end means occasion for match; drive means flick service; draw means cast lots. Furthermore, for the same sports English term, different matches have different ways of expression, for instance, for football, the sports English term is "score a goal", while in basketball, it uses "make a shot". For the place of match, in basketball, it is "basketball court", and in football, it is "soccer field".

2.1.2. Grammatical Features of Sport English

Sport English terms are technical. The technical feature in sports result is specially reflected in the aspects of tense and sentence structure. Firstly, elliptical sentence and imperative sentence are employed continually in headline of sports English, for the headline of sports news calls for clarity and brevity. For example, the headline "One for the Liverpool" only contains four words but it expresses itself clearly. In the headline "Williams Charged with Assault", the copula "be" is left out, which occurs regularly in the headline writing. Whats more, imperative sentence usually can be seen in the headlines of comments in order to grasp readers attention and leave reader in the meditation of one sports incident. For instance, the headline "Take Your Base, Coach Bill" actually refers that coach Bill should have achieved something with his team. Secondly, long declarative sentences often appear in the detail reports and articles of sports news. Thus, readers will know more details about process of the matches clearly through reading these long sentences. Thirdly, in order to contain more information and transmit clear information to readers, a large number of attributive clauses, appositive clauses and complex sentences are used in sports articles. Take this for example. "Swedish veteran Henrik Larsson, who has just joined Barcelona after his country's Euro 2004 campaign, is also likely to make the trip to China." If the attributive clause "who has just joined Barcelona after his country's Euro 2004 campaign" is omitted, readers have no way to learn that Henrik Larsson has just joined Barcelona. More information carried by these sentence patterns make reader largely informed.

Based on the characteristics of the sports reports, past tense and present tense are the most frequently used tenses. Present tense usually is employed in commentary. The sports correspondents report what

they are watching and what is happening in scene of competitions. Thus, present tense is their first alternative. Commentaries like “final seconds... Pierce puts it up, for the win...Knocks it down!” and off the dribble from the perimeter...Ilgauskas goes to the floor, at seven-foot-three ("7'3") and eleven years in the league...Lebron down the lane, Oh... all use present tense.

However, past tense is seen on newspaper, for the news on the newspaper happened in the past. It is also more objective and conventional to use past tense in the sports coverage. For example, Tim Duncan, Manu Ginobili and Tony Parker were terrific for three quarters, then good enough at the end to carry San Antonio to a 108-100 victory over the upstart Utah Jazz on Sunday (Harvey Araton: Terrific for Three Quarters, Spurs Won). The whole paragraph uses past tense to describe how Spurs won the game.

2.2. Sports English Translation

2.2.1. Studies at Home

Cheng Lixin(2007) discusses the previous studies on the word conduction method and vocabulary features of sports English terms by combining sports English language materials, he points out that the usual sports English word conduction are abbreviation and combined words, converted words and borrowing words, and so on. Besides, according to Cheng Lixin, the application of sports English term in vocabulary has the feature of flexibility. Xiao Lamei(2004) generalized its features as concise and precise, unique and flexible, vivid and humorous as well as rhetorical and changeable. Sports English usually use different words to express same or similar meanings. Fu Rong(2009) discusses sports English term characteristics and points out that sports cultural background is an important factor in its translation activity, translators should translate in the premise of correctly comprehending the cultural connotation of sports English terms. Regarding the translation skills of sports English, scholars at home generally discuss the items and ordinary skills for translators to pay attention to, for instance, Zhang Heping(2015) discusses the English-Chinese translation of sports English skills, and thinks that before translation, translators should completely comprehend the original English text to master the professional vocabularies and accumulate sports common knowledge, he sums up the main translation methods for sports English terms, such as liberal and literal translation, amplification and omission, and so on.

2.2.2. Studies Abroad

Basil(1997) thinks that sports English, as a kind of English used in professional field, its contents are wide and refer to all kinds of sports items and professional skillful actions and judgment words, and so on. Sports English has its own language characteristics. Therefore, for sports English term translation, it needs certain skill and method. In aspect of sports English terms, Tylor Edward(1871) discusses the origin of sports English idioms and its sports cultural background, he points out that there are many terms related to racing and football match, boxing match and basketball match, except the above sports English terms origins, there are idioms about baseball and wrestling, and so on. Nida(2001) also points out that any kind of idiom is the crystallization of language development with strong national color and distinct cultural connotation. For sports English idiom, because of its complicated origin, it should be translated on condition that translators understand the sports cultural connotation, sports translation should avoid ambiguity to achieve the functional equivalence. For the translation of sports English, David Katan(2004) discusses that the sports English translation should have special effect handling, he mentions the right understanding in sports English vocabulary and the translation of sports English slogan. Besides, in *Aspects of Language and Translation*, George Steiner(2001) mentions translation skills like word conversion and repetition, omission and passive grammar translation, and so on, he gives research on the system and detailing of sports English translation.

3. THE IDEA AND PRINCIPLE OF SPORTS TRANSLATION UNDER THE THEORY OF FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE

Nida emphasized that the translation must be faithful to the original meaning of the text and maintain its original style. According to Nida's theory of functional equivalent translation, in sports translation, the translator should first consider whether the translation method can promote similar responses between the readers of the original text and the target language. Of course, complete equivalence is impossible, even if there is a considerable degree of cultural heterogeneity or the relevant expression of the sports do not contain the symbolic meaning of cultural conflict, then the expression should produce similar functions, and the overall reaction of readers should be basically similar. Therefore, the following principles should be followed for the application of function-to-function translation theory in sports translation. First of all, if the translation is true to the original text, which may cause the misunderstanding of the meaning, it can be eliminated by adding notes. For example, in Chinese, the technical action called "horizontal bar with body hanging and twisting" is "windshield wipers" in English, if translated as wiper, it will cause people feel confused to consider that could be a part of the car, it is difficult to associate with the sports movement; the word is original from American car culture, the founder is not professional athletes, the name of the word is influenced by the local car culture. To translate as "wiper", not to explain the cultural background behind it, may easy to produce cultural conflict. Second, if the translation is unclear in order to be consistent with the form of the original text, the translator should modify the translation. After fully understanding the original text and the corresponding cultural background, make corresponding changes and try not to change the original intention. Third, when applying the translation of functional translation theory, if the translation is difficult to semantic and grammatically equivalent, the translator should make corresponding structural changes in the translation in order to be equivalent in the sense. Fourth, if the words in the translation are formally loyal to the original text and cause serious misunderstanding and cultural conflicts, the translator should be keenly aware and make necessary adjustments, and can choose other words with similar meanings instead to reflect the associative meaning of the original word. Finally, for sports translation, due to the characteristics that its form and content may change in different situations, the translator usually needs to deeply know the corresponding situation, deeply grasp the cultural background, and make more adjustment on different aspects.

4. PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES OF SPORTS ENGLISH TERMS TRANSLATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE TRANSLATION THEORY

4.1. Substitution: Analogical Equivalence

The "substitution method" is to use synonyms or words from another view to replace or deduce the meaning of words to meet the needs of writing or ideographic meanings. In many cases, this method is more in line with the need of language sense. This translation method, also known as "easy word translation", is another alternative in translation. The most important thing to use alternative translation is the translator's accurate and thorough understanding of the meaning of English. The analogical equivalence means using the idioms or word images of the target language to substitute the images of terms in the original language. In other words, it means to use the Chinese idioms or terms with different images but same function as original English terms. The target language readers psychological feelings are basically equal to the psychological feelings of original language readers. In this way, it can achieve Nida's functional equivalence. As sports English terms have images with strong culture and national as well as regional features which are quite different from Chinese culture and national color, if translator reserves the image of original English terms to seek equivalence in form, it will inevitably result in barriers to readers comprehension. However, if original English term is translated into typical Chinese idiom, it achieves vividness and conciseness, accuracy and

understanding effects despite of its failure in original image equivalence. Such analogical equivalence can convert image to seek for the main functional equivalence and similar reaction in both original and target language readers. For example, the "catch as catch" commonly used in wrestling commentators can be translated as "by hook". In wrestling, if an athlete catches an opponent and throws him on the ground, it means victory. And "catch as catch" in daily life is to "catch as much as possible". Another example is "neck and neck" as "victory". That is, in horse racing, if the two horses have opposite necks, they are evenly matched.

4.2. Free Translation: Abstract Equivalence

Because of huge differences in culture, there are many sports English terms which are hard to convert into images in Chinese language. In such situation, translators should abandon the original image to handle them with abstract equivalence to achieve the main functional equivalence and similar reactions in readers. In the translation of most English sports terms, this translation method is adopted. For example, "no room to swing a cat" is translated into "no space to move" or "the space is so narrow". In ancient times, while people were practicing shooting, they usually put cat in a bottle or cloth bag, then hung the bag on the tree as shooting target. The cat struggled in the bag and made the bag swinging back and forth, while the shooter stood in certain distance. Therefore, such kind of sport needs certain space. For another instance, high five is a usual gesture in match. It is a hand gesture made by two people. Each of the players stretches his hand as high as possible, and then both of them clap their palms with force. The Chinese version is "two palms hit together", a hand gesture for victory.

4.3. Literal Translation: Complete Equivalence

For some sports English terms, their images or symbolization as well as national feature may be special in English and Chinese, they do not result in misunderstanding or different imagination to readers. In this way, direct translation can be adopted to reserve the image and rhetoric as well as cultural features of sports English terms. At the same time, Chinese readers can know and enjoy the foreign culture and language characteristics. Such kind of translation is loyal to the original English terms from content to form. For example, "hit the mark" is translated into "shooting the bull's eye" (completely correct). This technical English term originated from shooting and target shoot, it stretches its meaning into Chinese "completely correct", and has the same image in the Chinese culture. For another example, "three strikes law" is translated into "three strikes out" (no more than three things). In baseball match, if the ball receiver does not strike ball for three times, then this player will be out of the match. This English sports term is similar to "no more than three things" in form and meaning. In the premise of not going against translation language rules or no wrong imagination in word meaning, it can translate the sports English terms with form and functional equivalence. Besides, it can also reserve English style and image as well as national color. For instance, "break the record" is translated into "record-breaking". Both Chinese and English sports terms have similarities in contents and forms as well as colors and metaphors. Some sports English terms have same meaning and emotion as well as same or similar images in Chinese. In this situation, complete equivalence can be used to translate sports English terms. For instance, Monday morning quarterback. Quarterback is the main role in rugby team. While attacking the opposite team, the quarterback orders the member of rugby team. In the 1930s, every Monday morning, men usually discuss the football match in the office, some people usually say if he was responsible for a team, the team will play better, and such kind of people is called Monday morning quarterback. Its meaning and emotional color as well as image are the same as Chinese "hindsight". Further along, With the development of information technology and the acceleration of globalization, many sports English terms already become words which are familiar to people. Therefore, these sports English terms connotations do not need extra explanation because they are well-known in the world. In translation of such kind of sports English terms, English expressions can be borrowed directly. In this way, it can perfectly keep the original

English information and make Chinese translation understandable. For instance, dark horse means a horse without reputation. However, sometimes, it achieves success out of peoples expectation. Dark horse means unexpected winner or those unexpected promoted person and candidate. For another example, marathon ,named by the event from ancient time ,is a kind of Olympic event of long distance race, and its distance is about 42km which is the rational significance or science meaning. However, it also has the associative meaning of testing a persons long-term competences or abilities, such as a dancing marathon.

4.4. Domestication: Combination of Abstract and Complete Equivalence

The abstract Equivalence translation is easy for readers to understand but it lacks cultural connotation of original English term. The sacrifice of some cultural meaning may result in troubles. If idioms with important cultural significance are ignored, it will result in certain vacancy in meaning. In this situation, translators can combine the abstract and complete equivalence to transfer the meaning of original English term as completely as possible. In this way, it can achieve image and vividness, easiness and understanding and thus achieve the functional equivalence and similar reaction in both original and target language readers. For instance, take off the gloves means without mercy. In formal boxing match players should wear specially made gloves and helmet for protection. If the player takes off the gloves, it means he will fight without mercy. The Hat Trick refers a football player scores for 3 goals continually. It is literally translated into "hat trick", but for the target readers know better ,the translation "three in a row" is more anastomotic with the cultural backgrounds.

5. CONCLUSION

In sports translation, in order to reach functional equivalence, the translator should first have a profound understanding of the original culture, grasp the specific images expressed by the original culture, clarify the translation concept, norms and principles, and avoid using subjective judgment or insist on formal equivalence in translation. At the same time, the translator should also analyze the cultural background of the target language and the primitive language, and ensure that which features can be abandoned or ignored, and which ones can be retained or maintained. In addition, in addition to understand the development of sports, rules, characteristics and other necessary knowledge, we should also use the substitution, free translation , literal translation, domestication methods and semiotics knowledge to achieve more ideal translation effect, make target-text readers and original-text readers produce similar psychological reaction, and promote the further spread of sports in the world and the in-depth development of cross-cultural communication, contributing to build the common value of different culture.

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