



A Study on the Characteristics and Translation of Chinese Ceramic Terms From the Perspective of Terminology

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Abstract

Chinese traditional ceramic terms are the core concepts in Chinese ceramic culture, carrying rich cultural connotations and historical values, but there are still some problems in their English translations, such as mistranslations, redundant translations and low acceptability of translation, which hinder the foreign exchange of ceramic culture to a certain extent, and the external publicity of museums and cultural institutions is not ideal. This paper selects three ceramic classics in the middle and late Qing Dynasty and their English versions widely spread in the western world as the source to build a Chinese-English parallel corpus of ceramic classics, guided by the theory of terminology, and takes the characteristics of terms in ceramic classics as the object of investigation to explain their connotations and English translation rules.

Key words: Terminology; Ceramic terms; Characteristics; Translation

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INTRODUCTION

Ceramic culture spread to the West with ceramic objects as the carrier, which had a far-reaching impact on the world. The name China refers to both porcelain and China. In recent years, the translation of Chinese ceramic culture has attracted some attention. Chen Ning and Hu Siqi (2023) put forward the optimized strategies for the translation of Chinese ceramic classics by analyzing the reality of the overseas dissemination of Chinese ceramic classics. Lu Junyu (2016) summarized the origin of the connotation of the core concept of ceramics, “Qing”, and put forward translation strategies in different contexts. Jin Wenli (2015) analyzed the English translation of ceramic color terms from the perspective of Receptional Aesthetics. Yang Hongying and Ma Haiying (2012) analyzed the names of porcelain exhibits in museums, and put forward specific translation suggestions from the aspects of glaze, shape, decoration and origin. However, the study of English translation of ceramic terms from the perspective of terminology has not received much attention from the academic community.

1. ANALYSIS OF TERMINOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CERAMIC CLASSICS

1.1 Systematicness and scientificity

Historically, ceramic glazes have a variety of colors. Ru kiln in the Song dynasty ware enchanted later generations with its appearance of “sky-blue after rain”, and Chen Liu of the Qing Dynasty described the famous color glaze variety “apple green” of the Qing Dynasty as “green as the river in spring”. From ancient times to the present, Chinese potters have never been stingy with their efforts

in ceramic color creation. Glaze colors in the history of Chinese ceramics include “green, bean green, shadowy green, jade green, pink green, blowing green” and other terms to describe the green glaze color, such as malachite green, melon skin green and fish. Gumbo green, turquoise green, snakeskin green and other green color glazes. There are also red glazes such as “sacrificial red, chicken red, red, cowpea red, Langyao red, pink, ruby red, drunk red, bright red, apple red, Jun red, copper red, alum red, coral red” and so on. These are mostly terms with modifier-core structure. According to the 225 color glaze terms collected, the author found that 213 of them belong to modifier-core structure, only “suckling mouse skin, child face, beauty drunk,” belong to the structure of non-modifier-core structure, therefore, it can be said that the naming of color glaze terms in traditional Chinese ceramic culture terms is in accordance with certain rules, which are on no account in disorder or in randomness. Domain-specific terms must be in a hierarchical system, and the naming of terms should be as systematic as possible. The nomenclature of each term of the same series of concepts should reflect logical relevance. (Feng, 2011)

In fact, potters in ancient times had a certain sense of terminology when naming terms, most of which can be seen through word formation and classification, for example, all blue glazes are named as “...Blue”, all green glazes are “... Green”, the author also found that the naming of ceramic production processes in Chinese ceramic culture terminology is also in accordance with certain rules, such as “clay refining, throwing, stamping, mould patting, feet digging, glazing” and other terms belong to verb-object terminology. According to statistics (Feng, 2008), there are as many as 1603 terms in traditional Chinese ceramics, including shape, decoration, glaze color, technology and other categories, which are rich in connotation and variety. Term naming is characterized by professionalism, single meaning and systematicness, and has certain rules (Qu, 2018). In many ceramic decorative terms, “incising, carving, stamping, embossing, engraving” and so on belong to the verb-object structure, and the same goes for other types of ceramic terms, such as ceramic glaze color terms, blue glaze terms “sacrificial blue, peacock blue, turquoise blue, sky blue”; green glaze terms such as “melon skin green, snakeskin, apple green” belong to the structure of deviation.

1.2 Imagery

The imagery of terms refers to the conceptual image processing of the rational concepts referred to by terms through metaphor, metonymy and other rhetorical devices with the help of the iconicity of human thinking in the process of naming and translating terms. (Wu, 2022) Imagery characteristics widely exist in ceramic decorative terms, giving ceramic technology a specific image to

produce effects, such as “anhua, linglong”, “anhua” refers to the use of fine tools to carve patterns on the porcelain body, forming clear hidden patterns after glazing. Tao Shuo records that “anhua (hidden design) pieces means the ware with fine carved dragon and phoenix design”, here refers to a kind of white teacup carved with dragon and phoenix patterns on the inner surface of Xuande kiln ware, which is clearly visible to the light. “Linglong” is a kind of carving and decorating technology of porcelain. (Feng, 1998) The word “Linglong” first refers to “bright and openwork”, and later in the technical field, it refers to “transparent and leaky” decoration. Linglong refers to a “clear” technique of expression in general, rather than the specific technique of carving with a carving knife. It is worth mentioning that the “Linglong” technique on traditional porcelain has evolved into a modern decorative technique in which a number of rice-shaped holes are carved with a metal knife on the body of the ceramic wares, and then the holes are filled with a pen dipped in glaze. The two techniques should be distinguished.

1.3 Integration

Historically, traditional Chinese handicrafts complement each other and integrate with each other (Zhang, 2013). Especially in the Song Dynasty, Chinese lacquerware technology, block printing technology and ceramic decoration technology influenced each other, and ceramic technology can be seen everywhere in the epitome of imitation lacquerware and bronze ware. The blending of technologies gave birth to the ceramic industry, such as “gilding, gold painting” and other technologies first used in lacquerware and movable type printing. Gold engraving, also known as gold engraving, is a kind of decoration technology. It was originally used to engrave patterns on the lacquer floor with the tip of a needle or a blade, and then fill the lines of the patterns with gold. Porcelain gilding is transplanted from lacquerware making technology. (Wang, 1998) Different from gold painting, “gold painting” refers to the direct use of gold powder to decorate patterns on objects, which shows that porcelain decoration technology has absorbed and learned valuable experience from other traditional technologies while developing itself, enriching the decorative effect of porcelain surface.

2. CONSTRUCTION OF CHINESE-ENGLISH PARALLEL CORPUS OF CERAMIC CLASSICS

2.1 Corpus construction and statistical methods

The author selects three ceramic classics in the middle and late Qing Dynasty, *Tao Shuo*, *Tao Ya*, *Jingdezhen*

Tao Lu and their English versions. *Tao Shuo*, written by Zhu Yan in the Kangxi period of the Qing Dynasty, is the first monograph systematically recording antique Chinese ceramics in the Qing Dynasty. It was translated into English by BuShell, the British envoy to China, in 1910. *Records of Jingdezhen Pottery*, written by Lan Pu and Zheng Tinggui in the Qing Dynasty, is a ceramic monograph dedicated to recording the porcelain making technology in Jingdezhen area. Its English translation was published in 1951 by Sayer, the former British Secretary for Education in Hong Kong. Eight years later, Sayer once again translated the famous ceramics collector in the late Qing Dynasty, the poet Chen Liu's ceramics collection monograph *Tao Ya*. These three translated works were published in the middle and early 20th century and belong to synchronic corpus. It has a certain reference significance.

a) Identification and proofreading of the original corpus. First, the author converts the source text and translated text of the three monographs into Word format through Abbyy Finereader, and then manually proofreads the English and Chinese texts according to the original materials. In the process of proofreading, the author uses EditPlus to deal with the problems in the text such as searching and replacing redundant newline characters and repeatedly wrongly recognized words, and finally obtaining clean Chinese and English corpora without impurities.

b) Sentence segmentation. Sentence-level segmentation in proofread text. Sentence segmentation of Chinese and English texts was carried out by using EditPlus software. Because the original Chinese text is in traditional Chinese without punctuation marks, we use the collated and annotated version with punctuation marks added by the publishing house. Sentence segmentation can be carried out on the original text by adding a sentence definition alignment mark <seg>< \ seg >, and sentence segmentation can also be carried out in a manual mode.

c) Sentence alignment. "Add Corpus" of Transmate is used to import the original text and the translation, and the Chinese and English are aligned according to the sentence level through the keys such as moving up, moving down, and deleting. Because the translator will split and combine a large number of sentences in the source text during translation, the automatic alignment rate is not particularly accurate, and manual assistance is needed to align the sentences.

d) Storage and retrieval. The Chinese-English bilingual corpus of ceramic classics has a total of 7164 sentence pairs, and the Chinese source text and English translation text have a total of 283895 words. In this paper, keyword search (KWIC model) is used to extract all the ceramic terms in the corpus.

3. TRANSLATION PRINCIPLES OF TERMS IN CERAMIC CLASSICS

3.1 Semantic equivalence

Most of the words in traditional ceramic decoration technology are related to manufacturing techniques, and their meanings can be known by their names, such as "incising, engraving, stamping, embossing, engraving", whose Chinese meaning is simple and easy to understand. "Engraving" refers to the flat or oblique knife-like tools made of iron, bamboo or bone on the body, which are carved obliquely on both sides. The etching layer is thin. incising refers to the use of needle-like tools on the body to draw straight decorative patterns in the form of engraved lines, and then add to glaze before firing. Stamping refers to the use of stenciling tools with patterns to imprint patterns on a green body that has not yet dried. Applique refers to the ready-made sculpture decoration, pasted on the body, with a three-dimensional sense of bas-relief. (Ye, 2006) "awl-incising", also known as "carving with an awl", refers to the use of sharp awl-shaped tools to carve out dragon and phoenix, flowers and plants and other fine line decorations on the surface of the porcelain blank. (Feng, 1998) It also belongs to the decoration of carved flowers. (Wang, 1998) "Carving" refers to carving decorative patterns into relief or carving through the open space outside the patterns. A pattern of holes on both sides. Such words can be translated directly according to their functions. It is worth mentioning that *duisu*, *tiehua*, *duijiang* all refer to a process of manually shaping the pattern and then pasting it on the body, so that the body decoration is embossed, so it can be translated into moulded and applied in relief.

3.2 Imagary equivalence

As mentioned above, both Chinese and Westerners will use concepts or images familiar to their own nation to refer to a certain decorative process. The exquisite craftsmanship of *linglong* in the Ming Dynasty refers to the carving and decoration process of carving a rice-shaped flower hole on the body, which is clear and empty. According to the principle of imagery, it can be translated as carved in open/pierced work. According to the Oxford Dictionary, openwork "refers to a metal or embroidered fabric with perforations", which specifically refers to a hollowed-out representation, mostly found in brocade. Nowadays, the well-known "exquisite porcelain" with glazed rice flower decoration and traditional carving technique are mixed together as "carved with openwork", which is suspected of being mistaken. The most widely accepted translation of "jiao tai" in the West is "marbling", marble originally refers to marble, twisted tire technology refers to the process of kneading two or more different colors of porcelain clay together, and then twisting and drawing to produce a marble-like effect, that is, "marbling

effect” “, the translation is concise and capable. Using this translation method, the reader can quickly connect with the referent. By contrast, the translation “twisted colored body” is much more redundant and obscure.

When traditional Chinese ceramic decorating technology and culture are imported to the West, westerners would also determine the appropriate translation of terms according to their own life experience, which is reflected in both the shape and glaze color of ceramics. For example, blue and white porcelain, the English translation of “blue and white” is based on its objective blue color and white color (Jin, 2015), and the tiger-skin glaze of the Tang Dynasty refers to the yellow and green in the tri-colored glaze of the Tang Dynasty, and the plain tri-colored glaze with purple glaze halo is named for its tiger-skin-like effect. However, the popular term in Western literature is not “tiger skin glaze”, but the interesting “spinach and egg”, which refers to one of the common breakfast dishes in Western families. It means that the effect of green spinach and yellow eggs is similar to the color of tiger skin in tri-colored wares. “Sprinkle blue glaze” is widely known as “snowflake blue” in the West, which is closely related to its “white glaze as if it were falling snowflakes”. This may give us an inspiration to consider an image translation method in the translation of traditional ceramics, which can not only retain the image, but also avoid redundancy.

3.3 Rule of convention

The “dui jiang” technique was introduced to France in the 19th century, and was first popularized in the Sevres factory in France. Since then, paste sur paste has been used and spread in Europe. The French call it “pâte sur pâte”, meaning the porcelain clay piled on the porcelain clay, and Hobson (1923) claims that the “pâte sur pâte” process of the French Severle and Minton factories is a variant of the Ming Dynasty mud decoration process, which is different from the opaque clay decorating technique used in the Qing Dynasty. The white clay of the Ming Dynasty

is translucent. In some domestic dictionaries of ceramic terms, its translation is also *pate sur pate*. Domestic scholars (Lu, 2015; Jin, 2015) have pointed out that some ceramic proper nouns have been translated in a relatively unified way in the West, and according to the principle of “rule of convention”, we should continue to use them and do not make up new translations to artificially set obstacles to the cultural exchange between Chinese and Western ceramics. For example, “qinghua”, blue and white, which is accepted and recognized by both China and the West, and has been well disseminated, and there should not be other translations.

4. CONCLUSION

From the perspective of terminology, this paper analyzes the systematicness, scientificity and integration of ceramic terminology. Based on the self-built ceramic bilingual corpus, this paper puts forward the translation methods of ceramic terms, such as semantic equivalence, imagery equivalence and rule of convention, and explores the strategies and directions of English translation of ceramic terms, in order to provide valuable reference for disseminating ceramic traditional culture.

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