Terminologia e Traduzione

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The Interplay between Terminology and Translation: Taking Terminology Translation in the Field of Civil Aviation from English into Chinese as an Example

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Table

Abstract

Since English has firmly and irreversibly established itself as the first language of world communication, it is commonly referred to as a lingua franca and exerts a profound influence on other languages. It is even so for civil aviation (CA) which is a fast-developing and interdisciplinary field. Based on linguistic analyses of terms in the field of CA as well as analyses concerning linguistic and trans-linguistic factors for the translation of CA terms from English into Chinese, the author concludes that in the field of CA, the influence English exerts on Chinese is extensive and that Chinese has been enriched during its contact with English.

Riassunto

Grazie al suo consolidamento come lingua dominante nella comunicazione internazionale, l'inglese viene spesso definito lingua franca ed esercita una profonda influenza su altre lingue. È quanto accade nella terminologia dell'aviazione civile, un ambito interdisciplinare in rapido sviluppo. Sulla base di un'analisi di termini dell'aviazione civile, che prende in considerazione fattori linguistici e interlinguistici della traduzione dall'inglese in cinese, l'autrice conclude che nel campo dell'aviazione civile l'inglese esercita una profonda influenza sulla terminologia cinese e ha contribuito ad arricchirla.

1. Introduction

According to CABRÉ (2005), terminology and translation studies are two emerging disciplines that differ from each other in focus and aim. However, they also share similarities and are in many aspects complementary. For instance, translation and terminology are both highly context-dependent (FAINI 2018). Terminology resources assist translators in the structuring of specialized knowledge in a certain domain, which is part of translation competence. Translation has also played a significant role in developing terminology as a discipline and as a practice since it has contributed significantly to enrich the lexicons of many languages (PRANDI & ROSSI 2017). This paper analyzes the extent to which English has influenced Chinese by comparing and contrasting Civil Aviation (CA) terms in English with their respective Chinese translations.

2. Previous research

2.1 Studies on the interplay between terminology and translation

Although there is no entry for "terminology translation" in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (BAKER 2004), it seems to be widely accepted that there is a close relation between terminology and translation. This is because «firstly, translators are major users of terminology, in the sense of the technical or special terms or expressions used in a given discipline, profession or activity. Secondly, terminology as a method of collecting, grouping together and structuring sets of terms peculiar to given subject areas, was developed and practiced largely by translators» (ROBERTS 1985: 343). Following ROBERTS, there are a large number of academic works addressing the connection between terminology and translation (HARTMANN & JAMES 1998, CABRÉ 1999, BAKER 2004, FABER 2009, BOWKER 2015, WEI 2018), which focus either on the benefits terminology brings to translation or vice versa.

In the context of the Chinese language, however, most terminology scholars and researchers treat terminology as lexicology. This may be partly attributed to the historical research of neologisms which were introduced in the 19th century and to the work China undertook for the standardization of terms during the first few years of the 20th century (WEN 2011). As a result, translation strategies and methods for terms are highly popular research topics in China (see, e.g. LIU 2000, FAN 2001, JIANG 2005, WANG 2019). Other related studies focus on the terminological competence of translators (WANG 2011, HAO & ZHANG 2015), and on the relation between terminology management and translation management (WANG & WANG 2019).

Every field, be it in social or natural sciences, is loaded with preconceptions, and terminology in the Chinese context is no exception. Much debate among science historians to determine which factors were liable for the absence of China during the invention of modern science, has taken place over the past few decades (ALLETON 2001). Although the Chinese language has not been considered a determining factor according to influential authors such as Joseph NEEDHAM (1970), a widely spread opinion is that the Chinese language and writing system hindered the integration of foreign words into Chinese. For instance, LOW (1995) holds that contact with modern science in China was mediated by the Japanese language. Although such a claim fails to take social and political factors into account, it undoubtedly proves the importance of terms for translation and the development of a society.

2.2 Studies on the translation of Civil Aviation (CA) terminology

The first linguistic contribution to the translation of terms from foreign languages into Chinese was made by GAO & LIU (1958), proposing four formal relations between the source word in a foreign language and the Chinese counterpart, i.e. imitation of sounds, translation based on meaning, transposition of the pattern and hybrids. However, academic work on CA terminology and translation only started in China in 2004, as several journal articles dealt with how translation should tackle CA terms. Related studies later include CA dictionaries (ZHOU 2010), the relationship between CA development and terminology translation (CHEN & ZHOU 2013) and the teaching of CA terminology (ZHU 2016). Additionally, there are CA textbooks and historical aviation works that address CA terminology and related translation issues. Topics concerning the translation of CA terms outside China include language features of CA (MODERN 2013: 227-242), problems caused by language and communication (CUTTING 2011, HOWARD 2008), and standards promulgated by ICAO (MODERN & HALLECK 2009).

Besides the official efforts made towards the translation of CA terms, several government units and organizations in China have compiled glossaries in the form of pamphlets and distributed them on a small scale - e.g. *Terms in Aeronautical Science and Technology* issued by China National Committee for Terms in Sciences and Technologies - CNCTST in 2004. However, they

have not yet gained comprehensive coverage and authoritativeness.

Yet, with air traffic rapidly expanding worldwide, CA has become increasingly relevant to other fields, including chemistry, physics, geography, astronomy, computer science and communications. Terminology in CA is also influenced by the concepts and terms in these fields. As a result, terms in CA display a cross-domain nature, requiring frequent updating and undoubtedly increasing the difficulty of translation and related studies. It is not only difficult for *Terms in Aeronautical Science and Technology* (2004) issued by CNCTST to include all the terminology in CA, but also hard for researchers to find references for terms in CA on a wider Chinese-speaking world (e.g. in Taiwan).

3. English as a lingua franca for Civil Aviation

Civil aviation is one of the two major categories of flying, representing all non-military aviation, both private and commercial. It is a fast-developing field and its language requires extreme precision.

English has been used widely as a lingua franca in CA for several decades (FARRIS 2016: 54). The status of English as a lingua franca has been officialized since the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) published and introduced *The Manual on the Implementation of ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements* (LPRs) for aviation personnel in 2004. As a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN), ICAO was established in 1944 when 52 nations signed the *Convention on International Civil Aviation* (also known as *Chicago Convention*) on Dec. 7th that year. Aiming to ensure the safety of domestic and international air traffic, ICAO has developed a series of international Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) for national aviation authorities in member states, to use and share when they are creating compatible rules and regulations of their own. At present, ICAO has 193 member states and China is one of them.

ICAO SARPs recommend that English should be «made available for international radiotelephony communications» (ICAO 2010) and «where the ground and the crew do not share the same native language» (FARRIS 2016: 54). As a result, English has become the main language in CA and exerts a profound influence on other languages. All ICAO member states, including China, have to harmonize their regulations with those of ICAO, which also means that they need to translate and standardize their terminology based on the English version.

4. The development of CA in China

When considering the timeline of CA development in China, it was not until 1930 that China Airlines was founded, although the Air Affairs Office had been established under the then Ministry of Transport in 1919. In 1931, another representative Chinese airline company, Eurasia Airlines, was established. In November 1949, China established the Civil Aviation Administration under the supervision of the Military Commission. Five years later, the State Council took charge of the Civil Aviation Administration and the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) is now under the supervision of the Ministry of Transport. Nowadays, the CAAC regulates flight safety as well as the ground safety of CA, and formulates industry development strategy including mid- and long-term plans for CA in China. Following China's Reform and Opening-Up period, more aircraft models and safety standards were introduced, propelling China's CA industry. Today, China is already a CA power as it is the world's second-largest aviation economy and is predicted to become the largest one in 2030 (BOEING 2018).

However, CA is still a very new field in China that only gained popularity and significance after the country aligned with ICAO and subsequently adhered to related regulations in 1983. Since it became a member state of ICAO, China has been trying hard to harmonize its regulations and laws with those of ICAO and prepare its version of these documents. As a result, the first task China had to fulfill to harmonize its regulations and laws with those of ICAO was to translate and standardize the relevant terminology, this is also because «the various uses of civil aviation data such as analyses related to safety, security and the efficiency of civil aviation and its environmental impact as well as forecasting and planning, require a suitable classification and a clear definition of civil aviation activities» (ICAO 2009).

In November 2001, the Group of Discipline Inspection, or Bureau of Supervision Stationed, of CAAC and the Bureau of Aviation Security of CAAC issued the *Civil Aviation Glossary*. Although this document incorporates the translation of several ICAO terms, it is mainly a translation of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)'s ORDER 1000.15A *FAA Glossary*[1], which brings together the terminology and definitions most commonly used by the FAA at work.

Another important work concerning CA terms and their translations in China is *Terms in Aeronautical Science and Technology* (2004) published by China National Committee for Terms in Sciences and Technologies (CNCTSC), an organization authorized by the State Council of China to examine and publish scientific and technological terms on behalf of the country. The work started as early as 1993, when the National Natural Science Terminology Committee (former name of CNCTSC) established the Aviation Branch Committee made up of CA practitioners and a research team from the Department of Personnel, Science, Technology and Education of CAAC. Completing the revision in 1996, experts held discussions concerning aviation terminology by the Aviation Branch Committee of CNCTST. Finally, the work was approved by the CNCTST in 2002 and published in 2004.

5. Features of terms in the field of CA

A very brief overview of the features of terms in the field of CA is provided in this section. English and Chinese examples are given in small capitals and italics respectively, with a symbol ">""/""