



On The English Translation of the Chinese National Community Consciousness and the Folktales of the Daur Ethnic Group

Zhang Suojun^{1*}, Tian Zhenjiang

¹Quzhou University, Quzhou, China

²Manzhouli Russian Vocational College, Inner Mongolia, China

Email: generalzhangsj@163.com

Abstract: The Daur's folktales contain rich national cultural signs, which are the concentrated embodiment of the experience and wisdom from the ancestors of the Daur. They are multi-dimensional, including national language, culture and thought, and are one of the important methods for scholars to study the historical development, ideological inheritance and cultural heritage of the Daur. Taking the consciousness of Chinese National Community as its theoretical guidance and utilizing Daur folktales as a foundational source, this thesis aims to conduct research on English translation methods in terms of semantics and pragmatics. The objective is to further explore the richness of our national culture and ultimately demonstrate that preserving and advancing our cultural heritage is a crucial step in strengthening the consciousness of Chinese National Community.

Key words: the consciousness of Chinese National Community, Daur, folktales, English translation;

Introduction

The term "Chinese nation" is a common appellation for all Chinese people. This term did not exist from ancient times; it was first used by Liang Qichao in his writings in 1902. However, it was not widely read by the public at the time and was mainly used within academic circles, with its connotation being somewhat different from what it is today. From a historical perspective, China has been a multi-ethnic country since ancient times, and the complexity and diversity of the meaning of the Chinese nation have been consistent throughout. In 1989, Mr. Fei Xiaotong proposed the theory of the "diversity within unity" of the Chinese nation, elevating the understanding of the Chinese nation to a new level, and gradually clarifying the consciousness of the Chinese national community. The Chinese national community is the product of the development of Chinese history, and the consciousness of the Chinese national community is the foundation of national unity, the essence of ethnic solidarity, and the soul of spiritual strength[1]. After the Central Ethnic Work Conference in 2014, especially after the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the consolidation of the consciousness of the Chinese national community has become a research hotpot in academic circles and has gradually become the guiding principle for strategic thoughts such as telling China's stories well, spreading China's voice well, and taking China's stories abroad.

This article, guided by the consciousness of the Chinese national community, selects representative Daur folk tales as its foundation to explore the paths of their English translation. The aim is to delve deeply, inherit, and promote China's excellent traditional ethnic cultures, ultimately serving the historical mission of forging and strengthening the consciousness of the Chinese national community.

The Intrinsic Connection between the Daur Ethnic Folk Tales and the Consciousness of The Chinese National Community

Folk tales generally refer to oral literary works created and disseminated by the working people. Their creation, formation, and dissemination processes determine that they are imbued with rich national history, social life, linguistic culture, and other characteristics. These characteristics are formed and developed bit by bit throughout history by each ethnic group and are an inseparable part of the Chinese national community. They are the crystallization of the wisdom and experience of the Chinese nation. Folk tales contain rich historical and cultural heritage, shared historical and cultural memories, and recognition of common human ancestors, which are the common factors that enhance the inherent organic nature of the Chinese national community, strengthen inter-ethnic ties, reduce psychological distance between ethnic groups, and are the glue that promotes ethnic unity and strengthens the consciousness of the Chinese national community^[2].

The Chinese nation is composed of multiple ethnic groups, diverse yet unified in form, and culturally inclusive. The Daur people are an integral part of the Chinese nation, and their folk tales are intrinsically, organically, and naturally connected with the consciousness of the Chinese national community. The Daur people primarily live in the Horqin Left Wing Rear Banner of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, the Nantun area of Hailar District in Hulunbuir City, and the Kunhe Village of Aihui County in Heilongjiang Province, among other places. They have long coexisted and shared life with the Han, Mongolian, Hui, Manchu, Oroqen, and Evenki ethnic groups, engaging in production and life together. This has resulted in a convergence and integration in political, economic, cultural, and social fields. The inherent organic nature



arises from the long-term interaction and integration among ethnic groups, manifesting in group perception as “you are within me, I am within you,” and in group relations as “mutualism” and “collaboration” across different ethnicities, regions, and eras^[3]. This interactive and integrated environment has laid a good and necessary foundation for building the consciousness of the Chinese national community. The folk tales generated in such an environment are interwoven with the consciousness of the Chinese national community, becoming an interconnected and organic entity. The consciousness of the Chinese national community is culturally manifested as identification with Chinese culture. The Daur ethnic group’s folk tales carry excellent traditional ethnic culture and are one of the important vehicles for expressing identification with Chinese culture. The Daur people have a language but no widely used ethnic script; folk tales play a crucial role in fostering a sense of national identity and cultural adaptation. Among the hundred Daur folk tales collected in *A Hundred Daur Folk Tales*, *The Story of Ola Changxing Inspecting the Sino-Russian Border* is particularly representative. The story mainly tells about the process of Hulunbuir Zouling Ola Changxing being ordered to inspect the Sino-Russian border during the first year of the Xianfeng Emperor’s reign in the Qing Dynasty. The values of “patriotism and dedication” embodied in the story are in complete harmony with the consciousness of the Chinese national community. Moreover, it can explain the understanding and cooperation with the important defensive measure of border patrol from the perspective of an ethnic minority. To some extent, it reflects the minority’s overall concept and awareness of the country, as well as their efforts and contributions to maintaining national sovereignty, unity, ethnic prosperity, and flourishing. These qualities, while repeatedly emphasizing the concept of the Chinese nation and discarding narrow nationalism, enable all ethnic groups to rely on each other politically, culturally, and economically for common development. All of these are highly consistent with the consciousness of the Chinese national community. The dissemination of Daur folk tales can also increase the accumulation of common cultural memories among all ethnic groups, thereby enhancing the inherent organic nature of the Chinese national community. For example, the stories of human origin told in the folk tales of different ethnic groups are basically the same, and the concept of a common ancestor is recognized. The continuous accumulation of similar or related cultural elements in folk tales and their mutual adaptation reduce psychological differences between different ethnic groups, laying the common cultural foundation for all ethnic groups. They become an important vehicle and link for the interaction, exchange, and integration of all ethnic groups, and ultimately play a positive role in the construction of the consciousness of the Chinese national community.

The spiritual qualities embodied in the folk tales of the Daur people are a positive component of the Chinese nation. The traditional culture embedded within these stories is an indispensable organic element of Chinese culture. The creation and transmission of folk tales provide a platform for interactions, exchanges, and integration among various ethnic groups. All these factors lay the foundation for the construction of a sense of community for the Chinese nation. Collecting, recording, organizing, and translating Daur folk tales can play a significant role in strengthening the consciousness of the Chinese national community.

Exploration of English Translation of Daur Folktales

The Daur people are an ancient ethnic group with a wealth of folk tales. Folk tales occupy a significant proportion of the cultural heritage of the Daur people, documenting the lives and struggles of the Daur working people in past eras from various perspectives, reflecting their ideals and aspirations^[4]. The themes, content, significance, forms, and variants are quite diverse, including both ancient myths and legends as well as charming fairy tales and animal stories with profound meanings. The folk tales of the Daur people are treasures of Chinese history and culture. The process of translating them into English is not only a protection, inheritance, and promotion of China’s excellent traditional culture but also an important step in realizing the strategic thought of “telling China’s stories well and spreading China’s voice” to the outside world. The following text attempts to argue the path of translating Daur folk tales into English from the perspectives of semantics and pragmatics, guided by the consciousness of the Chinese national community.

Semantic Perspective

The Hulunbuir region in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and the adjacent Nen River basin in Heilongjiang Province are the main habitats of the Daur ethnic group. These areas are located in the northern frontier of our country, and the diligent and brave Daur people have made tremendous contributions to protecting the national frontier and maintaining national unity. Among their folk tales, there are many stories about Daur generals from past generations guarding the frontier or inspecting the defense of the border, with *The Story of Ola Changxing Inspecting the Sino-Russian Border* being one of the more representative works.

The story mainly tells about the process of the Hulunbuir Zuo-ling Ola Changxing being ordered to inspect the Sino-Russian border during the first year of the Xianfeng Emperor’s reign in the Qing Dynasty. It includes several small stories such as inspecting the Ergun River, visiting the hometown of Yaksa, inspecting the Heilongjiang River basin, inspecting the Wudi River on the outer Xing’an Mountains, and being rewarded for serving the country. The story takes Ola Changxing’s mission to inspect the border as the main thread, from receiving the official document and bidding farewell to his hometown, to inspecting the Ergun River, passing through Yaksa City, the Heilongjiang River basin, the source of the Wudi River, and so on, completing his mission, being rewarded, and returning to his hometown. This border inspection took half a year and involved a long journey of ten thousand miles, reflecting Ola Changxing’s patriotic spirit of not caring for his own family but for the greater good, and his strong identification with the consciousness of the Chinese nation as a whole.

From a semantic perspective, details that reflect Ola Changxing’s patriotic spirit and the consciousness of the Chinese national community must be given sufficient attention and emphasis during the translation process, so that the central idea of the story is more prominent, the educational significance is clearer, and the ideological guidance is more specific after

translation into English.

Here is a typical case during the translation process,

“清朝咸丰元年的时候，呼伦贝尔佐领敖拉·昌兴奉皇帝之命，去额尔古纳、格尔必齐河巡边，先观察俄罗斯国的动向。再探查乌第河源头。这次巡边从初夏出发，深秋返回，一心为国家，把个人家事全抛置在一边”^[5]。

This paragraph appears at the beginning of the story and serves as an overview of the entire plot, not only detailing the time, location, characters, and other elements of the story, but also conveying the purpose of this border patrol and the protagonist Ola Changxing's sense of national community, placing the interests of the Chinese nation first. The author attempts to translate this text as:

“In the first year of Xianfeng in the Qing Dynasty, Ola Changxing, the commander of Hulunbair, was instructed by the emperor to conduct a reconnaissance mission along the Erguna and Gerpizi rivers to monitor Russian activities and verify the origin of Udi. This expedition commenced in early summer and concluded in late autumn, with unwavering dedication to serving our nation while setting aside all personal matters.”

Based on the entire plot and background information, there are several semantic translations of terms that are worth noting here. In the source language, it is mentioned that Ola Changxing was ordered to patrol the borders, first to “observe the movements of the Russian state,” and then to “explore the source of the Udi River.” First, let's look at the part about “observing the movements of the Russian state.” The conventional translation is “to observe the trends of the Russian state,” but this translation does not accurately convey the semantic meaning of the source language. Here, the word “observe” actually means to “monitor” or “surveil” any military actions by Russia. The author attempts to translate this part as “to monitor Russian activities.” The word “monitor” is closer to the source language context in both connotation and denotation and can, to some extent, reflect Ola Changxing's correct interpretation of the imperial order from the perspective of national interests. Moving on to the end, where Ola Changxing is praised for being “devoted to the country,” the common English translation is usually “to serve the country with all his heart.” The author attempts to translate this sentence as “with unwavering dedication to serving our nation.” From a semantic perspective, “to serve the country with all his heart” can objectively express Ola Changxing's loyalty to his homeland and obedience to the imperial order, but it does not fully reflect the subjective initiative of Ola Changxing's patriotic feelings. Ola Changxing always saw himself as a member of the big family of the Chinese nation, always placing the interests of the country and the people first. He deeply understood that maintaining the unity of the motherland and the prosperity of the nation was the highest interest of all ethnic groups. This is a “unwavering” belief, as well as a selfless “dedication”.

The story translated into English, as well as the original, can convey a positive and uplifting theme. It can explain the understanding and cooperation of ethnic minorities regarding the important defensive measure of border patrols from the perspective of ethnic minorities. This reflects the broad vision and overall awareness of our ethnic minorities towards the country, as well as their efforts and contributions to maintaining national sovereignty, unity, and the prosperity and flourishing of the nation. These qualities emphasize the concept of the Chinese nation while rejecting narrow nationalism, leading to mutual reliance among all ethnic groups in politics, culture, economy, and emotion, and promoting common development. All of this is highly consistent with the concept of strengthening the consciousness of the Chinese national community that has been proposed in our country.

Pragmatic Perspective

In the folklore of the Daur people, there are many stories themed around “clever characters.” These stories are almost entirely shared with other fraternal ethnic groups such as the Han Chinese, which shows that although the Daur people have lived outside the Great Wall for a long time, they have maintained close cultural exchanges with the Han people, and are an inseparable part of the big family of the motherland^[6]. The story *The Clever Girl* included in the collection *Folk Stories of the Daur People of China* is highly representative.

The story mainly circulates in the Daur area near Fulaerji in Qiqihar City. It takes the clever girl as the main character, depicting the daily life of a Daur family, and focuses on the entire process of the clever girl's wit and bravery in outsmarting three rascals and the county magistrate. The language is simple yet reveals the clever girl's exceptional intelligence. The plot is filled with ups and downs, and the logic is reasonable and convincing, incorporating virtues such as bravery and wisdom of the Chinese nation. It also serves as a historical testament to the long-term interactions and exchanges among the Daur and other ethnic groups. Particularly, the part where the clever girl outsmarts the county magistrate is the most exciting.

The plot goes like this: the county magistrate deliberately made things difficult for an old man and his family, insisting on seeing the calf born by the bull. The old man was very in trouble, but his clever daughter-in-law, when she received the county magistrate the next day, deliberately mentioned:

“县大爷!真不巧，我阿查坐月子了，生了个女孩子，怕着凉不能出来接待你。”

县大爷奇怪地问：

“哦，男人还能坐月子生小孩子？”

聪明媳妇反问道：

“县大爷!犍牛能下犊儿吗？”^[7]

The authors will attempt to translate this text into:

“I regret to inform you that my Acha is currently in confinement of month and afraid of catching a cold due to the recent birth of his daughter, so he is unable to meet you.”

The county magistrate expressed his curiosity, asking “how is it possible for a man to give birth?”

In response, the wise daughter-in-law humorously asked “then, how a bull could give birth to calves?” From a pragmatic perspective, the first sentence serves as a setup for the continuation of the story, namely, “Magistrate! It’s quite unfortunate, I, Acha, am in the postpartum period, and I’ve given birth to a girl, afraid of catching a cold and unable to come out to receive you.” In the source language, the author employs a loose sentence structure to express this, which aligns well with the characteristics of spoken language. However, considering that the illocutionary act of this sentence is intended to make the magistrate question or even be surprised by the content being told, the translation takes a contrary approach by converting the loose sentence into a periodic sentence. Periodic sentences are particularly suitable for creating tension or constructing a sense of anticipation, thus forming an important or unexpected conclusion. In the translation, the use of a periodic sentence places the subordinate information at the beginning, compelling the magistrate to closely follow the train of thought of the clever girl, only to learn at the end that Acha cannot receive you because a man has given birth to a child^[8], which lays a good foundation for the clever girl’s subsequent rhetorical question.

The story takes a common little girl as its embodiment, affirming and celebrating the wisdom of the Daur people and their courage to fight against the evil forces represented by rogues and hooligans and the ruling class represented by the county magistrate. These qualities have always been the enduring virtues of the Chinese nation, the driving force and source of our national development that we have been pursuing and exploring from ancient times to the present. They are the core elements that enable the Chinese nation to stand firm among the nations of the world and remain undefeated. The translation should highlight these virtues of the clever girl, deepen the theme, and allow the readers of the translated text to gain a deeper understanding of the spirit and soul of the Chinese nation while enjoying the story. Ultimately, it aims to strengthen the consciousness of the Chinese national community.

Conclusion

The Daur people are one of the important ethnic minorities in the northern frontier of our country. Their virtues of diligence, bravery, wisdom, and patriotism are widely spread among the populace. Folk tales, as one of the significant carriers, deserve more attention and deeper exploration from scholars. From the theoretical height of the consciousness of the Chinese national community, studying the English translation of Daur folk tales not only helps to enhance the international influence of Daur culture but also deepens cultural identification and exchange among all ethnic groups in our country. In the specific practice of English translation, it is important to focus on handling the details that reflect the consciousness of the Daur ethnic community to ensure that the translation accurately conveys the thematic meaning and educational value of the original work at both semantic and pragmatic levels. Through continuous translation practice and research, we can not only better protect and inherit Daur folk culture but also promote the exchange and integration of various ethnic cultures. It is also one of the important ways to forge and strengthen the consciousness of the Chinese national community.

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