

Reverse Translation of Bashu Internet Slang and the Reconstruction of Cross-Cultural Identity

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Abstract. Digital media-reinforced glocalization transforms the cross-border dissemination of local culture. This research focuses on China's Bashu area, examining the English reverse translation of internet slang from its distinctive socio-linguistic context. Taking "cultural reverse nurturing" as its core theoretical perspective, the study integrates translation sociology and semiotics findings to construct a multi-dimensional analytical framework. It identifies this practice as an intentional endeavor by online youth groups to reconstruct cross-cultural identities. Rigorous case analyses demonstrate reverse translation's role as a pivotal semiotic practice, empowering local cultural actors to transition from passive objects of representation to active agents of self-representation. The discussion extends to contemporary humanities development approaches, providing valuable perspectives for grasping the evolving dynamics of cultural exchange in the digital age.

Keywords: Cultural Reverse Nurturing, Reverse Translation, Bashu Internet Slang, Cross-Cultural Identity

1. Introduction

In the traditional intercultural communication framework, cultural transmission has long been led by elites who rely on canonical works and convey content through "direct translation" into their native language. This conventional model emphasizes the systematic and professional nature of cultural dissemination but ignores the initiative and creative potential of grassroots participants. The digital age has reshaped this landscape through "grassroots globalization," a force essentially remolding cultural spread.

As a representative of Southwest Chinese cultural traditions, the Bashu region—covering mainly Sichuan and Chongqing—has seen its local dialect gain new digital vitality. Regional internet catchphrases like "báshì" (comfort), "xióngqǐ" (rise up), and "pà ěrduǒ" (henpecked) have spread nationwide via platforms such as Weibo, Douyin, and Bilibili, encouraging non-native speakers to carry out spontaneous "reverse translation." These cultural enthusiasts actively integrate these local expressions into English, creating a unique communication phenomenon.

This phenomenon goes beyond established theoretical frameworks such as the "native language principle" [1] and the "foreignization/domestication dichotomy" [2]. Its driving forces lie in the transformation of contemporary cultural identity. Traditional translation studies focus on linguistic precision and cultural faithfulness but overlook translation's inherent identity-constructing role.

Amid the interaction of globalization and localization, translation has evolved from mere language conversion into a critical tool for expressing and reconstructing cultural identity. Studying this phenomenon deepens our understanding of modern cultural communication while providing new perspectives on the development of humanities in the digital era.

2. The integration of reverse nurturing theory, reverse translation, and identity construction

2.1. The cross-cultural extension of cultural reverse nurturing theory

The idea of "cultural reverse nurturing" – first put forward by Professor Zhou Xiaohong – was created to describe how younger people pass cultural knowledge back to older generations when society is changing fast [3]. This theory breaks the usual way cultural transmission works, showing new patterns of how culture moves in modern societies. This study extends the theory from how different age groups interact to how different cultures interact, putting forward the theoretical idea of "cross-cultural reverse nurturing." In today's highly globalized world, cultural reverse nurturing is no longer just about interactions between age groups; it now appears in new forms that cross geographic borders and cultural gaps.

As "digital natives," young people are good at using new media technologies. They also have a strong desire to express their culture and a global view. They are no longer willing to be shaped by mainstream culture passively ---- instead, they act as active "reverse nurturers," sharing local knowledge with the global cultural community. This cross-cultural reverse nurturing is both a way to resist cultural dominance and an active effort to build cultural diversity.

2.2. An exploration from the perspective of translation sociology

In traditional translation studies, there is a great emphasis on language equivalence; The social and cultural aspects associated with translation are not well considered. Sociology of translation proposed by Anthony Pym has a new research perspective that the translation is inherently a social practice rooted in the specific sociocultural context [4]. In this context, researchers helped shift away from the debate on "authenticity of reverse translation" by noting the critical value of social and cultural practices and identification texts.

When it comes to the reverse translation of Bashu internet slang, choices by different translators actually reflect the cultural condition and their concept of identity. By applying a specific translation method, translators do more than simply convey linguistic information; they also create specific cultural images and establish appropriate cultural identities. This text recognition act not only confirms its cultural identity but also engage in cross-cultural communication.

2.3. Meaning reproduction from a semiotic perspective

From a semiotic view, reversing the translation of Bashu internet slang involves a subtle process: as its meaning lies in the various cultural fields, it evolves in three stages: "appropriation," "adaptation," and "regeneration." [1] This process clearly shows cultural signs are dynamic and creative in cross-cultural interactions.

The "appropriation" phase occurs when the translator selects the original symbol and places it in context with the new setting. A dialect vocabulary with distinct local characteristics and vitality is chosen to engage in intercultural exchange. The "adaptation" phase comes into play, in which the translator adapts the wording of the original text to suit the culture mentality of the target and absorbs the relevant information. Finally, there is the "regeneration stage", where symbols acquire

new meanings and values in the new cultural environment. These three stages are combined and form together the transformation of Chinese symbolic meanings in cross-cultural communication. This mechanism not only ensures the effective spread of the culture, but also reflects the natural vitality and innovative spirit of the culture.

3. Identity rebuilding strategies in reverse translation

3.1. Multiple translation and cultural adaptation of "Báshì"

"Báshì" is one of the most representative words in the Bashu dialect, and its reverse translation has many different forms. Our observations find at least twelve different English translations online --- each one shows the translator's unique cultural position and method.

The translation "bashful" uses a homophonic strategy, creating cultural links through similar sounds. While this translation may not be completely accurate in meaning, its fun and easy-to-remember nature has made it widely used in informal online situations. This reflects the translator's focus on effective message delivery in cultural exchange. The translation "Chengdu-cool" adopts a branding strategy, integrating local characteristics with symbols of global youth culture. This approach not only conveys the core meaning of "Báshì" but also shapes a trendy image of local culture, demonstrating the translator's proactive focus on promoting local culture. "Sichuan-satisfying" uses an explanatory translation method, seeking to preserve cultural uniqueness while ensuring accurate meaning transfer. This method prioritizes cultural authenticity and integrity, reflecting the translator's respect for the term's deeper cultural connotations.

These different versions together create a wide range of meanings, allowing people from the target culture understand the cultural idea of "Báshì" from different angles. The fact that these different translations exist together is itself a way to confirm and practice cultural diversity.

3.2. Emotional transfer and collective identity in "Xióngqǐ"

"Xióngqǐ" started as a cheer used in sports venues. Translating it involves more than mere linguistic conversion—it serves as a means to convey emotional patterns and collective spirit across cultures. Our analysis finds deep mechanisms of emotional transfer and identity building in the translation of this word.

The translation "Rise up!" captures the main emotional feature of the word. It extracts the term from its specific sports context and transforms it into a universally applicable expression of encouragement. This translation successfully conveys emotions across cultures, enabling audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds to perceive its power and passion. The direct transliteration "Xiong Qi!" uses a foreignization strategy, maintaining the word's "foreign" feel to emphasize its cultural specificity. This method preserves the culture's uniqueness while creating a new cultural symbol, providing more vocabulary resources for cross-cultural conversations.

Notably, an interesting thing happens when this word is translated and used: some international sports fans have started using it in their own cultural contexts, endowing it with new meanings. This "boomerang effect" of culture fully illustrates how complex and creative cross-cultural reverse nurturing can be.

3.3. Social critique and identity alignment in "Bān Wèi"

"Bān Wèi" is a newly emerged slang that describes the feeling of being tired from work. Its translation shows how young people use language creativity to criticize society and build groups

based on shared identity [5]. The creation and spread of this word reflect young people's common experiences and critical views on workplace culture today.

The translation "the smell of overtime" uses a metaphorical strategy, turning the abstract feeling of work tiredness into something concrete. This translation not only passes on the basic meaning of the word accurately but also makes people feel emotionally connected through its vivid imagery. It shows the translator's pursuit of linguistic craftsmanship and focus on communicative effectiveness. The translation "office fatigue vibe" focuses more on being relevant to today's world and fitting with youth culture. By using the popular word "vibe," the translator successfully connects local cultural expressions with global youth language, rendering the translation easier to spread.

3.4. Subtle social comments in "Pà Ěrduǒ" and the challenges of translating it

"Pà Ěrduǒ" (literally "ear-pulling") is a lively Bashu expression that describes a husband who is dominated by his wife. It serves as a useful case for exploring how to sensitively translate gender-related cultural concepts. Reverse translation attempts highlight significant challenges in accurately conveying culture-specific gender dynamics.

Direct translations like "henpecked husband" or "whipped" convey the main meaning right, but they often lose the word's mixed tone—it can be both critical and endearing, reflecting the complex local attitudes towards marital relationships. Some creative translations, like "Sichuan-sweetheart-who-listens-to-his-wife," seek to reimagine it with a more positive, modern connotation, removing any negative feelings. This shift in how the word is presented demonstrates translators are making a conscious effort to adapt it to the global feminist context. It may even reshape the cultural identity associated with the term—shifting from a mild source of ridicule to a symbol of equal partnership.

The challenge in finding a perfect translation illustrates that reverse translation is a place where traditional social identities are discussed and sometimes updated for cross-cultural use. The choices translators make are not just about linguistic competence but also the translators' stances on gender norms. This turns a local phrase into a comment on relationship dynamics that apply everywhere.

4. Reverse translation and a new direction for humanities development

4.1. Challenging the elitism in cultural communication

The reverse translation of Bashu internet slang first challenges the elitist nature of traditional cultural communication. In the past, when cultures communicated across borders, cultural output was usually led by professional organizations and cultural elites, with a focus on systematic and professional spread [1]. But this top-down model ignored the ability and creativity of ordinary people to some extent. Reverse translation in the digital age breaks this pattern: ordinary internet users take an active part in cultural communication through spontaneous translation, making the process more diverse and democratic [6]. This bottom-up model not only enriches the content and forms of cultural communication but also redefines who participates in it and how it happens.

More significantly, this kind of grass-roots cultural communication prompts us to rethink what "culture" means. Culture is no longer just the high-quality works created by elites — it is a living practice that is constantly being created and recreated in daily life. This shift in cultural understanding exerts significant influence on contemporary humanities research.

4.2. A vivid practice of glocalization

The reverse translation of Bashu internet slang is a clear example of glocalization. In the context of globalization, local cultures have not disappeared as some predicted. Instead, they have gained new vitality through creative integration with global elements. This phenomenon demonstrates that globalization and localization are not opposing processes—they share a dialectical relationship of mutual promotion and transformation [7]. Through creative translation practices, young people not only preserve local cultural uniqueness but also help it engage in global cultural dialogue. This innovative cultural practice offers a fresh perspective on contemporary cultural development.

The practice of glocalization further illustrates that the vitality of a culture comes from its openness and creativity. Cultures that can actively face the challenges of globalization and creatively update their own traditions are often able to find new development opportunities in new historical situations.

4.3. Nurturing intercultural sensibilities

Reverse translation of Bashu internet slang also contributes to fostering intercultural humanism at a micro level. People from different cultural backgrounds can better understand each other's lifestyles, values, and emotional patterns. This helps cultivate their capacity for cross-cultural understanding and empathy [8]. Such daily life-based cultural dialogue is more impactful and accessible to broader audiences than formal cultural exchange initiatives. It turns cross-cultural understanding from an abstract idea into a concrete daily practice, which promotes mutual understanding and respect between different cultures more effectively.

This practice fosters equal cultural dialogue in which all cultures have a voice and can contribute to global cultural construction through their unique approaches. This spirit of equality serves as a key foundation for building a more inclusive and diverse global cultural landscape.

5. Conclusion

By extending the theory of "cultural reverse nurturing" to cross-cultural communication, this study analyzes in depth the cultural significance and identity dynamics of the reverse translation of Bashu internet slang. This phenomenon is a cross-cultural identity rebuilding movement initiated actively by local cultural actors—especially young people in the digital age. Here, reverse translation is no longer just a tool; it has become an important semiotic practice for self-expression and finding one's identity.

The reverse translation of Bashu internet slang offers a key insight: future humanities research should place greater emphasis on these dynamic, grassroots cultural practices embedded in daily life. Only by deeply understanding these small-scale cultural innovations can scholars better grasp the new trends in humanities development in the digital age and promote the creative development of human civilization. For foreign language studies, this means teaching and research need to focus more on how language is used dynamically in real social situations. The goal is to train "cultural reverse nurturers" who have both confidence in their local culture and the ability to communicate globally.

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