

A Study on the Characteristics and Strategies of Translation in Automotive Industry Terminology in the Light of Newmark's Translation Theory

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With the continuous advancement of globalization and multilateral trade, the import and export of the automotive industry has developed rapidly. The automotive industry has gradually become an important part of industrial trade. This article aims to explore the lexical characteristics of terminology in the automotive industry in depth, including the abbreviation of terms, the singularity of meaning, and the frequent use of compound and derived words. By combining case analysis of translations and guided by Newmark's communicative translation theory, the study has found that the following translation strategies can be applied to automotive industry terminology: literal translation under semantic translation and free translation under communicative translation. The authors hope to provide some reference and assistance for future translation of automotive industry terminology.

Keywords: terms in the automotive industry, translation strategies, Newmark's translation theory, lexical characteristics

Introduction

With the deepening of trade globalization, the demand for imported and exported vehicles is increasing day by day, which enhances the professionalism of translation in the automotive industry. Against this backdrop, the accuracy and professionalism of the translation of automotive industry have become particularly important. At present, research on the translation of automotive industry in the academic circle mainly focuses on the translation of automotive industry texts (Zhang, 2023). However, there is little discussion on the translation characteristics of terms in the automotive industry and the choice of translation strategies (Li & Jia, 2023). This not only restricts the in-depth development of translation practice, but also affects the efficiency and quality of international communication in the automotive industry.

Accordingly, based on the authors' review of relevant automotive English books, which cover professional terms and knowledge in the automotive field, the book is widely used as an automotive professional textbook to help automotive professionals keep up with the latest developments in international automotive technology in a timely manner. The authors have conducted an in-depth analysis and summary of the lexical characteristics of automotive industry terminology. In the light of Newmark's translation theory and combined with case analysis, the authors have explored the use of literal and free translation methods for terminology. Through this study, the

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authors hope to help improve the accuracy and professionalism of the translation of automotive industry terminology to promote international communication and cooperation in the automotive industry.

Lexical Characteristics of Automotive Industry Terminology

In order to make the translation of automotive industry terminology more accurate and unified, it is necessary to analyze its lexical characteristics, so as to choose appropriate translation strategies later on. By reading relevant automotive English books, the authors have conducted an in-depth analysis and summary of the characteristics of automotive industry terminology. This chapter will analyze the characteristics of automotive industry terminology from several aspects, including the abbreviation of terms, the singularity of meaning, and the use of compound and derived words.

The Abbreviation of Terms

In the translation of automotive industry terminology, a large number of abbreviations are used, which are often highly specialized and concise, for example: Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA)—“故障类型与影响分析”; Electronic Stability Control (ESC)—“电子稳定性控制”; Traction Control System (TCS)—“牵引力控制系统”; and Anti-lock Brake System (ABS)—“防抱死制动系统”. These technical terms are highly specialized, complex, and scientific. Therefore, technicians can quickly identify and discuss relevant issues by abbreviating the terms.

The use of term abbreviation not only simplifies the expression, but also facilitates memorization and lookup. In automotive technical documents, the meanings of automotive industry abbreviations are relatively fixed, which enables technicians to look them up quickly. Many automotive industry abbreviations are internationally accepted, which also helps with technical communication between multinational automotive companies, suppliers, and research institutions.

The Singularity of Meaning

The phenomenon of polysemy is common in general English. But in the translation of automotive industry terminology, there is a large number of words with a single meaning. These words are mostly specialized automotive terms and are relatively rare. For example, “accumulator” specifically refers to “a battery”, “actuator” specifically refers to “a micro-motor”, “crankshaft” specifically refers to “a crankshaft”, and “torque” specifically refers to “torque”. These words rarely appear in daily English and are highly specialized, but their meanings can be accurately looked up in specialized dictionaries.

Words with a single meaning have high accuracy and consistency in translation and use. Since their meanings are fixed, they can avoid ambiguity and misunderstandings caused by polysemy during translation. Specialized terms such as “turbo”, which translates to “涡轮”, have clear and consistent meanings that are not confused with other meanings.

The Use of Compound and Derived Words

In automotive industry terminology, word-formation methods are mostly compound words and derived words. For example, “windshield” (a combination of “wind” and “shield”) means “挡风玻璃”, “horsepower-hour” (a combination of “horsepower” and “hour”) means “马力时”, “dashboard” (a combination of “dash” and “board”) means “仪表盘”, and “sunroof” (a combination of “sun” and “roof”) means “天窗”. These words are mostly compound words made up of several words. On the other hand, words like “radiator” (from the verb “radiate” +

the noun “-or”), “silencer” (from the verb “silence” + the noun “-er”), “bumper” (from the verb “bump” + the noun “-er”), and “ejector” (from the verb “eject” + the noun “-or”) are mostly derived words formed by adding a noun suffix to a verb. The use of derived words makes the functional orientation of automotive terms more explicit. Through the form of derived words, the function and role of automotive components can be clearly expressed.

In summary, the purpose of translating automotive industry terminology is to convey accurate technical information to the target language readers. Newmark’s (1988) communicative translation theory emphasizes that the translation should enable the target language readers to understand and accept the information in a way similar to that of the source language readers, which is highly consistent with the goal of translating automotive industry terminology. However, after reviewing the existing literature, the authors found that most studies on terminology focus on the translation of terms in fields, such as biology, fashion, agriculture, and civil engineering. The translation strategies derived from these studies are mostly part-of-speech conversion, addition, and omission, and translation with notes. In contrast, research on the translation of automotive industry terminology is limited to practice reports on the application of Newmark’s translation theory to the translation of automotive texts. There is still a gap in the exploration of translation strategies for automotive industry terminology from the perspective of Newmark’s translation theory.

An Introduction to Newmark’s Translation Theory

Peter Newmark’s translation theory is an important part of modern translation studies, especially in the area of communicative translation, which has had a profound impact on translation practice. In *A Textbook of Translation*, Newmark categorizes translation into two primary types: semantic translation and communicative translation. Semantic translation focuses on the literal meaning and form of the source language text, striving to preserve the semantic and stylistic features of the original in the target language (Yuan, 2003). Communicative translation, on the other hand, emphasizes the reception of the target language readers, considering the readers’ understanding and reaction, that is, the effectiveness of information transmission. It highlights clarity and readability (Yuan, 2003). Semantic translation integrates the strengths of word-for-word translation, literal translation, and faithful translation, focusing on conveying the full meaning of the original text. In contrast, communicative translation combines the essence of domestication, free translation, and idiomatic translation, placing greater emphasis on the readability and communicative effectiveness of the translation.

In the automotive industry, the accuracy and readability of terminology are of utmost importance. Automotive industry terminology not only conveys technical information, but also involves crucial aspects, such as safety, operation, and maintenance. Additionally, some terms may be associated with specific cultural backgrounds. Therefore, both semantic translation and communicative translation play significant roles in the translation of automotive industry terminology. Semantic translation focuses on fully conveying the entire meaning of the original text, ensuring the accuracy of technical information, while communicative translation pays more attention to the readability and communicative function of the translation, enabling target language readers to easily understand and accept these terms. These two translation methods are alternately used in the translation practice of automotive industry terminology, complementing each other and enhancing the accuracy and professionalism of the translation of automotive industry terminology.

Translation Strategies for Automotive Industry Terminology in the Light of Newmark's Translation Theory

When translating terminology in the automotive industry, the choice of translation strategies is particularly important. Newmark's (1988) communicative translation theory advocates that translators should consider the target readers' expected reactions and cultural background, as well as the purpose of the translation in the target context. The concepts of "semantic translation and communicative translation" proposed by Newmark in his book *A Textbook of Translation* have expanded the age-old debate between literal and free translation in the translation community and have pointed out new ideas and directions for translation studies (Chen & Zhang, 2008). This theory provides important guiding principles for translation practice, especially in terminology translation, where translators need to flexibly choose translation strategies based on the function and purpose of the terms in specific contexts. Building on the analysis of the characteristics of automotive industry terminology in the previous chapter, this chapter will delve into the application of literal and free translation methods in the translation of automotive terminology.

Literal Translation

Semantic translation focuses on the literal meaning and form of the source language text, striving to be as faithful to the original as possible. When translating terms that are abbreviated or have a single meaning, literal translation is often the most appropriate strategy. The strategy of literal translation aims to preserve the content and form of the original text as much as possible, ensuring the accuracy and consistency of automotive industry terminology.

For example, in the automotive industry, the term "skirt" is directly translated as "裙板". In automotive technical documents, "skirt" usually refers to the skirt panel at the bottom of the vehicle, which is used to protect the vehicle's underbody structure and optimize aerodynamic performance. The direct translation "裙板" accurately conveys its function and location. Similarly, "trim" is directly translated as "内饰". In automotive user manuals, "trim" typically refers to the interior decoration materials of the vehicle, such as the upholstery of seats and the dashboard. The direct translation "内饰" accurately conveys its function and use. Another example is "fender", which is directly translated as "翼板". In automotive repair manuals, "fender" usually refers to the fender of the vehicle, which protects the wheels and the body. The direct translation "翼板" accurately conveys its function and location. These terms usually have corresponding professional terms in the target language, so the use of direct translation strategy is very appropriate.

Literal translation is an effective method in the translation of automotive industry terminology, as it helps to maintain the professionalism and accuracy of the original text. However, when applying the strategy of literal translation, translators should also be aware of its limitations and make appropriate adjustments according to the characteristics of the target language and the needs of the target readers. In this way, translators can ensure that the translation is both faithful to the original and easily understood by the target language readers.

Free Translation

Communicative translation, on the other hand, focuses more on the readability and communicative function of the translation, enabling target language readers to easily understand and accept these terms. In the automotive industry, many terms, when translated literally, are difficult for non-automotive professionals to comprehend. Therefore, when translating such terms, translators can employ free translation to convert the contextual meaning of the terms into expressions that are more readily accepted in the target language culture, thus avoiding

misunderstandings. Automotive industry terminology is often highly specialized and abstract. Free translation can help simplify these complex terms into more accessible language, making them understandable even to non-specialists.

When translating the term ABS, a literal translation would be “防锁制动系统”, but a free translation is “防抱死制动系统”. ABS is an automotive safety system designed to prevent the wheels from locking during braking. While the literal translation “防锁制动系统” is accurate, the expression “防抱死” is more commonly used in Chinese and aligns better with the expression habits of Chinese readers. By using the free translation “防抱死制动系统”, the original term’s accuracy is preserved, and the translation becomes more natural and fluent, in line with Newmark’s communicative translation theory, which emphasizes that the translation should enable readers to easily understand the meaning of the original text. Similarly, the term “Catalytic Converter” can be literally translated as “催化转换器”, but a free translation is “尾气净化器”. A Catalytic Converter is an automotive exhaust treatment device used to reduce the emission of harmful gases. Although the literal translation “催化转换器” is accurate, it may not be as intuitive for the average reader. By translating it as “尾气净化器”, the translation becomes more in line with the expression habits of Chinese readers, allowing them to more intuitively understand its function. This approach not only conveys the accurate meaning of the term, but also aligns with Newmark’s communicative translation theory, which emphasizes that the translation should enable readers to easily understand the meaning of the original text.

In the light of Newmark’s translation theory, the use of free translation for automotive industry terminology can effectively transform specialized terms into expressions that are easier for target language readers to understand, thereby achieving effective communication of information. This method of translation not only helps to enhance the readability and comprehensibility of the translation, but also better adapts to the contextual needs of different cultural backgrounds, in line with Newmark’s concept of communicative translation.

Conclusion

The translation of automotive industry terminology significantly differs from that of general terminology. While the translation of general terms mainly focuses on mastering linguistic features, cultural differences, and translation skills, the translation of automotive industry terminology is more complex. In the translation process, it is not only necessary to be proficient in the cultural characteristics of both languages and translation skills, but also to have a deep understanding of professional knowledge in the automotive industry. The lexical characteristics and translation techniques of automotive industry terminology are significantly influenced by context and communicative function. This article analyzes and summarizes the lexical features of automotive English from relevant books and combines Newmark’s translation theory of semantic and communicative translation to use literal and free translation methods for these terms. Therefore, when translating, attention should be paid to the patterns of language expression, the characteristics of automotive industry terminology should be understood, and the dynamics of the automotive field should be mastered to ensure the accuracy and professionalism of the translation.

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