

A Religious Book Translation by Pragmatic Approach: The Vajrachedika-Prajna-Paramita Sutra

Authors : Yoon-Cheol Park

Abstract : This research focuses on examining the Chinese character-Korean language translation of the Vajrachedika-prajna-paramita sutra by a pragmatic approach. The background of this research is that there were no previous researches which looked into the Vajrachedika-prajna-paramita translation by pragmatic approach until now. Even though it is composed of conversational structures between Buddha and his disciple unlike other Buddhist sutras, most of its translation could find the traces to have pursued literal translation and still has now overlooked pragmatic elements in it. Accordingly, it is meaningful to examine the messages through speaker and hearer relation and between speaker intention and utterance meaning. Practically, the Vajrachedika-prajna-paramita sutra includes pragmatic elements, such as speech acts, presupposition, conversational implicature, the cooperative principle and politeness. First, speech acts in its sutra text show the translation to reveal obvious performance meanings of language to the target text. And presupposition in their dialogues is conveyed by paraphrasing or substituting abstruse language with easy expressions. Conversational implicature in utterances makes it possible to understand the meanings of holy words by relying on utterance contexts. In particular, relevance results in an increase of readability in the translation owing to previous utterance contexts. Finally, politeness in the target text is conveyed with natural stylistics through the honorific system of the Korean language. These elements mean that the pragmatic approach can function as a useful device in conveying holy words in a specific, practical and direct way depending on utterance contexts. Therefore, we expect that taking a pragmatic approach in translating the Vajrachedika-prajna-paramita sutra will provide a theoretical foundation for seeking better translation methods than the literal translations of the past. And it implies that the translation of Buddhist sutra needs to convey messages by translation methods which take into account the characteristic of sutra text like the Vajrachedika-prajna-paramita.

Keywords : buddhist sutra, Chinese character-Korean language translation, pragmatic approach, utterance context

Conference Title : ICM 2015 : International Conference on Multilingualism

Conference Location : Prague, Czechia

Conference Dates : July 09-10, 2015