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The Influence of Chinese and Western Cultural Differences on English Translation

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Abstract: There is a close relationship between language and culture. As a carrier of culture, language translation is not only the conversion of language meaning, but also the communication and collision between different cultures. Translators need to have an open attitude of cultural acceptance, understand the impact of cultural differences on English translation and adopt appropriate translation methods to improve the quality of English translation. Based on this, this paper discusses the relationship between culture and language and between culture and translation, and then analyzes and discusses the influence of cultural differences between China and the west on English translation.

Keywords: China and the West; Cultural Difference; English Translation

Preface

In the practice of English translation, the success of translators not only depends on their proficiency in language technology, but more importantly, whether they can deeply understand the deep differences between Chinese and Western cultures. Only with cultural sensitivity can a translator successfully build a bridge of communication and solve the challenges of various cultural differences that may be encountered in the process of translation. Translators need to have an open attitude of cultural acceptance, understand the impact of cultural differences on English translation and adopt appropriate translation methods to improve the quality of English translation. Based on this, this paper discusses the relationship between culture and language, the relationship between culture and translation. And then analyzes and discusses the influence of cultural differences between China and the west on English translation.

1. Language, Culture and Translation

1.1 The relationship between culture and language

The relationship between culture and language is very close, and they depend on and influence each other. Language is an important carrier of culture. Meanwhile, cultural heterogeneity significantly shapes the cultural connotation and linguistic features of all nationalities, and cultural diversity shapes the diversity of languages. Language is a cultural carrier deeply rooted in customs and spiritual connotations, and as an indispensable element of culture, language plays a key role in cultural transmission. Therefore, culture and language have formed a dynamic relationship that influences and complements each other. It can be said that without language, culture will lose the means of expression and dissemination; Similarly, the development and change of language, in turn, shapes and enriches the cultural connotation.

1.2 The relationship between culture and Translation

The multi-cultural and linguistic environment around the world adds complexity and difficulty to cross-cultural communication. For the smooth progress of cross-cultural communication, English translation plays a crucial role as a bridge. In the process of translation, if the unique cultural background of each other is ignored, cross-cultural communication barriers will arise. Therefore, translators must be proficient in two languages and understand their potential cultural heritage, which will help them accurately convey the information of the source language through accurate language selection, and at the same time, they can gain insight into the deep cultural meaning of the original English text. A deep understanding and grasp of the language connotation in different cultural backgrounds is the key link to achieve effective cross-cultural communication. As a carrier of culture, language translation is not only the conversion of language meaning, but also the communication and collision between different cultures.

2. The Influence of cultural differences between Chinese and Western cultures on English translation

The diversity of cultural differences is reflected in various aspects, including but not limited to the contrast of geographical environment,

similarities and differences in cultural history, diversity of religious beliefs, different ways of thinking, significant differences in customs and habits, etc., all of which are cultural factors that affect the quality of translation.

2.1 The influence of geographical differences on English translation

Geographical environment difference refers to a kind of regional cultural difference formed by the region, natural conditions and geographical environment. For example, when translating the English proverb “To spend money like water” into Chinese, it will be translated into “spend money like soil” “挥金如土”. here the word “water” is translated into “soil” according to the regional characteristics of China, because China is a landlocked country with farming as the main way of life, and has special feelings and reverence for the land. Therefore, there are many words in Chinese composed of mountains and earth, while Britain is an island country surrounded by oceans, so English rarely uses earth to express itself, and generally uses water. Another example, Americans often use “from sea to sea” to mean “all over the country.” This is because the United States is located between the Atlantic Ocean to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west. So “from sea to sea” means across the country.

2.2 The influence of differences in customs and habits on English translation

Due to differences in living environment, national history, cultural traditions and other conditions, each nation has formed completely different cultural customs and habits. For example, The slogan of a perfume “Her smile could heat up a nation. her fragrance captured a country.” The brand’s translation does not adopt a straightforward and lengthy translation, but uses eight words to translate it. It is in line with the habit of Chinese people to use catchy and concise words. Among them, “heat up a nation” and “captured a country” are translated with the Chinese idiom “倾国倾城”, which can make Chinese people call up the ancient Chinese beauty. In Chinese traditional habits, “dog” is often a metaphor for bad people and bad things, and there are idioms about “dog” that contain derogatory meanings, such as “挂羊头卖狗肉”、“狐朋狗友”、“狗急跳墙” and so on. But in western countries, dogs represent “loyalty”, “luck”, “Love” and so on, and in Western countries, people’s love for dogs is often expressed, such as “lovely dog”, “Good dog”, “Love me, love my dog” and so on. It can be seen that people in different countries and cultures have different likes and dislikes for the same thing.

2.3 The influence of different ways of thinking on English translation

Chinese people’s way of thinking is to regard all parts of the world as a unified whole, and think, observe and deal with everything in the world from an overall perspective, which is comprehensive thinking emphasizing synthesis and collective, while Westerners prefer to go straight to deductive reasoning, which is highly formalized and logical, and is a typical logical analytical thinking. Mode of thinking is closely related to language, which is the deepest mechanism for the generation and development of language, while language is the driving force for the formation and development of thinking. Due to the differences in mode of thinking, there are many differences in word order between English and Chinese languages, such as: “Mike did not remember his grandmother who died of cancer when he was three years old.” (迈克三岁时, 祖母死于癌症, 所以不记得), Chinese people’s thinking habits are from shallow to deep, focusing on forward thinking and the cause first. The western way of thinking is different, it is a reverse way of thinking, often the first effect and then the cause. Because of the difference between these two modes of thinking, there are also great differences in language expression. For example, “Zhejiang, China” is translated into Chinese as 中国浙江, so in the western description, it is expressed from small to large, in reverse, it is expressed from large to small in Chinese. Therefore, understanding the differences between Chinese and Western ways of thinking can help us to improve our communication skills and the quality of translation. otherwise it is easy to have major cultural obstacles.

3. Translation methods under the differences between Chinese and Western cultures

The diversity of geographical environment, social tradition and religious belief has given birth to the unique cultural characteristics of various countries and nations, and these differences are often manifested through the carrier of language. This cultural difference is directly reflected in the challenge of English translation, forming a cultural gap. In order to eliminate these obstacles, translators need to carefully understand the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western cultures, and flexibly use various translation methods according to the effectiveness of information transmission and expression needs.

3.1 Literal translation

Literal translation means that in English translation practice, the literal meaning of the original text is translated as far as possible, that is, the content and form of the original text are maintained. For example, “Strike the iron while it is hot” is translated as “趁热打铁”, “The stupid bird flies first” is translated as “笨鸟先飞”, “The courtyard is like a market” is translated as “门庭若市” and so on. The basis of literal translation is to search for words and structures similar to the original text, and strive to reproduce the form and meaning of the original text in the translation, so as to maintain its original purity. Therefore, literal translation not only highlights the distinctive characteristics of foreign cultures, but also enables readers to grasp the deeper meaning of the language. In the process of literal translation, translators also need to be

keenly aware of and adapt to the characteristics and habits of the target language to ensure that the receiver's understanding is barrier-free. In general, literal translation not only respects the original form, but also needs to take into account the acceptability of the target language to achieve a balance between the two.

3.2 Liberal translation

Liberal translation is a translation method that means translating according to the meaning of the original text, rather than translating word for word. In the process of translation, it shows a deep grasp of the essence of the original text, and emphasizes the transmission of the core of information rather than the literal correspondence. When literal translation may lead to readers' comprehension obstacles, free translation is particularly important. For example, in English translation, "to kill two birds with one stone" is translated as "to kill two birds with one stone" or "to kill two birds with one stone"; "a drop in the bucket" is translated as "nine cows and one hair" or "insignificant"; "to flog a dead horse" is translated as "to kill two birds with one stone" "In vain" or "in vain" as in "A loss may turn out to be gain." We translate it as "a blessing in disguise". From this, we can see that the free translation strategy is more concerned with abandoning the surface form of language, making the sentence shorter and taking the accurate semantic transmission as the primary goal.

3.3 Transliteration method

Transliteration method refers to the translation of English with similar pronunciation of Chinese characters. Transliteration is often used to translate names and places. At the same time, this method is also applied to the translation of some abstract or specific concepts, for example, English, "clone" and "salon" are translated into Chinese, "克隆" and "沙龙" cool (酷). For example, "Benz" (奔驰), "Hummer" (悍马), "Cannon" (佳能) and other well-known brands, we will use transliteration to translate, so that it can accurately describe the quality of the product, but also reflect the unique Chinese culture. "奔驰" not only retains the original pronunciation, but also reflects the demand of Chinese consumers for "fast"; "悍马" is not only the quality of the car is strong, but also the "horse" this ancient Chinese advanced means of transportation directly translated into Chinese, so that the Chinese people can understand at a glance, leave a deep impression; "佳能" also appropriately showcases the top quality of Cannon cameras. Therefore, transliteration can preserve the exotic flavor of the original text and It not only retains the beauty of the original trademark and brand name, but also fully reflects the quality of its products. Sometimes, a particular word or concept in one language doesn't have an equivalent word in another language. Transliteration is a great solution.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, translation is not a simple language transformation, but the blending of two languages under different cultural backgrounds. In the process of cross-cultural communication, translators should not only master the languages of different countries, but also fully understand the cultural differences between countries, and should flexibly choose translation methods according to specific situations. In this process, translators should adhere to the principle of respecting various cultures and devote themselves to the accurate transmission of information with an open attitude of cultural acceptance, so as to promote effective cross-cultural communication.

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