

The Influence of Cultural Differences between Chinese and English on Translation

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| Received: 23.03.2021 | Accepted: 01.05.2021 | Published: 07.05.2021 |

Abstract: As a bridge of cultural communication, translation is not only the transformation between different words, but also the collision of different languages in the way of thinking, cultural background and cognitive style. Many scholars have carried out a large number of translations from the perspective of cross linguistic activity. However Nida even claims that “for truly successful translating, biculturalism is even more important than bilingualism”. Therefore, this thesis will focus on analyzing the influence of cultural difference between Chinese and English on translation.

Keywords: Cultural Differences, Translation, Thinking Mode.

INTRODUCTION

The difference among different languages depends on the difference of our cognition. Cognition is the reflection of thinking, and thinking is the reflection of culture. There are tremendous differences in many aspects between Chinese and English as they belong to different language families. Language reflects people's different cognition of the objective world. Language is an objective world that has been processed by the humanity brain. Language originates from the objective world and is dissimilar from the objective world. Therefore no language can truly reflect the objective world. That is, the root that contributes to the differences between the two languages is the different ways of cognition and different world outlooks, which in turn also largely reflected in various forms of linguistic expression. As Charles W. Fergus [1] has remarked that a word is a world; it is history in the briefest form. It is spot on a page but frequently a story of great events and movements.

Chinese perceptual thinking

We say language reflects people's way of thinking. English and Chinese belong to different language families, so they are different in many ways, this difference not only is reflected in lexical but also reflect in our ways of thinking. English speakers prefer the analytical thinking while the Chinese prefer comprehensive thinking. The philosophical background of Chinese is the power of understanding the Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Comprehension has the characteristics of consciousness and

figurativeness, which leads to Chinese people attaching importance to intuitive intention and the power of understanding. The reflection in thinking refers to the perceptual thinking. Lian Shuneng [2-4] pointed out that perceptual thinking has the characteristics of intuition, visualization, subjectivity, integrity and fuzziness. The perceptual thinking embodied in Chinese language can be summed up as follows:

1) Image characteristics of Chinese

Chinese are good at thinking in terms of images. As a result, Chinese language is accustomed to expressing abstract concept with concrete images, and the number of imagery words in Chinese more than those in English. For instances, Chinese are rich in measure words such as 一块、一沓、一堆、一片、一串、一滴、一条、一头, etc. When we say 块, it refers to solid, square things. For example, we say 一块木头, 一块蛋糕, 一块豆腐。一沓 generally describes some papery things, neatly bundled together, so we often say 一沓钞票, 一沓纸, 一沓信笺。一堆 means a lot of things that overlap or crowd together, so we often say 一堆沙子, 一堆垃圾, 一堆金子。一片 is usually used to express something flat and things such as 一片雪花, 一片花瓣, 一片面包。一滴 Refers to a small point in a liquid so we usually say 一滴水, 一滴泪, 一滴汗, 一滴露珠。Therefore, those measures in Chinese can express the appearance of things vividly and intuitively. In English languages, generally countable nouns have no measures, and the numbers are followed directly by countable nouns, for

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Citation: Hongping Chen & Yu Zhang (2021). The Influence of Cultural Differences between Chinese and English on Translation. *Cross Current Int J Peer Reviewed J Human Soc Sci*, 7(4), 67-72.

example: three cats. When foreigners learn Chinese language, they often feel awkward about the use of measures for countable nouns. It is more difficult to memorize the fixed collocation of measures with countable nouns. In all language around the world, uncountable nouns are used in conjunction with measures. This is a universal law of necessity, such as: a piece of paper, a cup of tea. So measures are the unique grammatical phenomenon in Chinese [5, 6].

2) Subjective characteristics of Chinese

The subjectivity of language is not only embodied in the use of living nouns as subjects to express the speaker's attitude, position and emotion, but also in our word-formation and our daily expressions, such as: our Chinese character 鲸, which consists of two parts, the 鱼 on the left and the 京 on the right. When we first saw this tremendous animal, we first thought it belonged to a kind of fish, so on the left side, we chose the word "fish" to indicate its species, while on the right side, the word "京" reflects both its sound and shape. In Chinese 京 means big and tall. The original meaning of the word "鲸" is super-large fish, but this is only our subjective feeling, because whales are not fish. They are mammals in the ocean. So our language subjectivity in the word formation is very strong. In addition, in our daily language can also reflect the subjective characteristics of Chinese, for instance: 他手里抱着孩子. We carefully think about this sentence. How can we hold a child in his hand? We should hold the child by our arms, but in specific communication we do not say that 他个胳膊里抱了个孩子. We think that the arm is related to the hand, so we use the hand to express. But the English version is that he holds a baby in his arms. They use arm instead of hand, so the expressions in English are relatively objective under rational thinking.

3) The vagueness of Chinese

The ambiguity of semantics is the opposite nature of the logical semantics. The semantic ambiguity of Chinese is not only reflected in vocabulary, but also in daily use. As far as vocabulary is concerned, most subordinates of Chinese have the problem of semantic ambiguity. For example, when we say the 羊年 what kind of sheep it refers to? And when we say that I bought a car today, what kind of car is it? These concepts are relatively vague. On the other hand, in our daily language, we can also reflect the fuzziness of Chinese. For example, 巴金的书 it has two implications a book by Ba Jin and a book owned by Ba Jin. These expressions all show the ambiguity of the Chinese language[7].

Rational Thinking in English

The Philosophical Background of English is the Formal Logic initiated by Aristotle, which has greatly influenced the thinking of westerners. Thinking

is closely related to language. Thinking mode is the inmost mechanism of language formation and development. Language is the manifestation of thinking mode. Westerners have been good at abstract thinking and abstract theory research since ancient times. They also express abstract characteristics in language.

1) Abstraction

English speakers are good at abstract thinking; as a result English have many abstract nouns. Besides, the nouns and prepositions are used more frequently in English, the nominalization of English often leads to the abstraction of expression. A heavy reliance on the noun at the expense of the verb, in the end, will detach the mind of the writer from the realities of here and now, from when and how and in what mood the thing was done, and insensibly induce a habit of abstraction, generalization [3]. This method of abstract diction is found in the frequent use of abstract nouns. By contrast, Chinese prefers to use concrete or specific words, expressing abstract ideas often by allegory, simile, or other devices for making a thing plain. For instance, I marveled at the relentless determination of the rain. 雨无情地下个不停, 我感到诧异

2) Objectivity

In contrast to Chinese, the objectivity of English language is very obvious, which is reflected in the fact that English often employs the inanimate nouns as the subject of the sentence, especially in the non-personal passive form with it as the subject so that the facts or opinions are expressed objectively. For instance, it is believed, it is important, it is no doubt, a good idea occurs me suddenly. It is important for us to learn language, etc. In addition, the English language uses a lot of passive voices in order to express its objectivity, for example, the visitors were impressed by this county's scenery.

3) Logic

We can see that all the first letter of words in English sentences should be capitalized, and there is no capitalization in Chinese. Besides, English sentences have a strict subject-predicate structure that is to say SV SVP SVO SVoO SVOC, These five basic sentence patterns must have a subject and a predicate in each sentence. The subject of Chinese is optional. Such as 能吃他三五个馒头, and its English version "I can do with three to five five steamed buns". We can see that the English sentence adds a subject "I". Furthermore, English verbs have various morphological changes to express various grammatical meaning, while Chinese do not have any morphological changes, for instance, he eats an apple, he ate three apples, we can see the distinctions between eats and ate, between an apple and apples, which indicates different tense and numbers.

The cause of the difference

Language and culture are always closely connected. In fact, language is rooted in culture and

deeply influenced by cultures. There are huge differences between English and Chinese language cultures. There are many reasons for these differences.

1) Geographical environment and climate differences

The United Kingdom is an island country surrounded by the sea. The coastline is tortuous, the harbour is deep, and there are good sailing conditions. Navigation has promoted the development of the British economy. In the long-term maritime life, the British have applied the natural phenomena and accumulated experience to the language and formed a lot of words and idioms related to the ocean. For example, it is a silly fish that is caught twice with the same bait. 智者不上两会当, sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. 恶有恶报。And rock the boat 捣乱, all the sea 不知所

In addition, the temperate maritime climate also affects English vocabulary, marine climate, rain throughout the year, and the distribution of precipitation is relatively uniform. So there are a lot of proverbs about precipitation, for example, save sth for a rainy day. 未雨绸缪, right as rain 身体健康一切正常, head in could 不切实际, 好高骛远, chase rainbows 做白日梦。China has a subtropical monsoon climate with four distinct seasons, so there are many corresponding meteorological proverbs. For instance, 早春好佚陶, 早夏粒米无, 立夏小满雨水相赶, 雷打秋, 晚冬一半收。瑞雪兆丰年, etc[8].

2) Difference in religious belief

Religion, as a reflection of social life, is the product of the development of human thinking at a certain stage. It is the product of human cultural activities. The influence of different religious beliefs on language vocabulary is enormous. The British mainly believe in Christianity, the Chinese believe in Taoism and Buddhism, and the English and Chinese languages have formed a large number of idioms and aphorisms under their respective influences, such as the British. The people believed in God, so many expressions about God came into being. For example whom the gods love die young. 好人不长寿, God speed you! 祝你一路顺风, the danger past and God forgotten. 过河拆桥, etc, in addition, the Christian doctrine of the Bible also affects the vocabulary of English, for example, keep me as the apple of the eye. (Old Testament Psalm the chapter 17 章) 求你保护我 an eye for an eye 以眼还

(Deuteronomy of the Old Testament) etc, however, under the influence of Buddhism and Taoism, Chinese people believe in Buddha and God, so they have formed many corresponding expressions, such as 借花献佛, 平时不努力, 临时抱佛脚, 跑的了和尚跑不了庙, 魔高一尺, 道高一丈, 老天爷饿不死瞎家雀儿 etc.

3) The influence of ethnic cultural differences

Language is the carrier of culture and the tool of recording a national culture. It is not only restricted by the culture of different nationalities, but also reflects the cultural characteristics of different nationalities. Cultural differences determine that the same thing contains different emotional colors in different cultures, such as the influence of color on vocabulary. Red means beauty in Chinese, for example, in Chinese, beautiful women are called 红颜知己, the prosperous world are called 红尘, and the honor roll is called 红榜. However in Britain, red represents blood and danger, so there are many words related to red in English, such as red figure (赤字) red ruin (火灾), and red battle (血战, etc. In addition, different animals have different emotional colors because of different national cultures. Fish in China, because of its pronunciation sounds like “余”, stands for surplus, implies good, deeply loved by the Chinese, for example, the Chinese people use “年年有余” to express the best wishes. In English-speaking countries, however, fish is derogatory and generally describes some bad people or things, such as 无耻之徒 (a cool fish), a poor fish (可怜虫) etc.

4) Historic culture differences

Historic culture refers to the culture precipitated in the specific historical development process. Different nations and countries will accumulate some cultural words with their own distinct national characteristics because of the different historical development process. For example, Chinese has many interesting historical allusions mostly originated from “春秋” “史迹” “汉书”, “后汉书”, “三国志”, etc. For example, 卧薪尝胆 describes a person who endures humiliation in order to carry out an important task, and at last he achieves success, 负荆请罪 refers to a request for guilt to the others, the initiative to confess to others, apologize to others, and give themselves a severe punishment. 刮目相看 refers to the fact that others have made progress, we can't use the old light to treat him. And Most of the historical allusions in the West come from ancient Greek and Roman mythology, such as Achilles' heel (致命的弱点), Pandora's box (灾难、麻烦、祸害的根源).

The method of translation

The tremendous difference between Chinese and English language cultures will inevitably have a certain impact on translation. This paper puts forward several suggestions from the following aspects.

1) The tips of Lexical gap

The meaning of English words can be found in Chinese by the corresponding words. For instances 书 book. 猫 cat. There is only partial correspondence in the lexical sense, and there are narrow and broad

distinctions. For instances: uncle 叔叔, we all know that uncle can express many relations in daily life, such as the brother of your father or mother; the husband of your aunt. But our Chinese people called mother's brother 舅舅 instead of 叔叔 but there are also some situations difficult for us to translate, because, we can't find the corresponding word in the target language, that is to say some Words with Chinese characteristics are unique in Chinese culture, so the Chinese need to use some characters to express them, so it is difficult for translators to find the corresponding words, for instances:

龙 are unique in Chinese culture, some translators want to find the corresponding word to express it in English, they think the Chinese characters 龙 have some commons with the English verb dragon, so they translate 龙 into dragon, but this is a completely wrong translation. First of all, the English word dragon originally refers to a fictional animal in European mythology. It is huge, fierce, and looks like a monitor lizard. It has huge bat wings. Can fly, eat people, but also like fire-breathing attacks. Its symbolic meaning is very negative. In foreign media, the dragon of this European mythology animal has been used to symbolize all kinds of bad things. In the process of running for the presidency, Trump was portrayed by the competitor as Dura, while his supporters portrayed his objections, such as Political Correctness, as Dura. Trump is portrayed as an ancient hero who kills Dura. Therefore, translating "龙" into "dragon" is very wrong. The Chinese claim to be "the descendants of the dragon." The dragon is also the main symbol of China in the international community. In the eyes of foreigners, this is the Chinese who claim her to be demons. China has to shake off the situation of "beating" and "starving" and is time to solve the problem of "挨骂". However, the translation of the 龙 into dragon is a big trouble, which provides a convenient condition for the anti-China forces to demonize China. Therefore, the wrong translation of "Dragon" should be corrected as soon as possible.

However, there are also vocabularies with Chinese characteristics, and we translated very well in Chinese-English translation. For example, Chinese Kung Fu is a unique vocabulary in China. Besides, the culinary culture of our country is very prosperous, and the food culture made our country need a lot of vocabulary to express them in food, but because there is no such food in Western countries, so there is no specific vocabulary to express them in English. 豆腐 Tofu, for example, is a Chinese cuisine product, but Western countries do not have this food, but in the process of cultural exchange between China and the West, we need to express the culture of our country to the Western countries. Under this circumstance, some translators adopt transliteration methods, and then make

some minor adjustments according to the western phonology system, and translate kungfu into kung fu. Translate the 豆腐 into toufou. Therefore, when translating the dragon, we can also use this method to translate the dragon into a long, but because the West has the word long, the word is used to express the length of some things, but we find the word can express the shape of the our Chinese animal 龙, we can make a slight adjustment on the vocabulary, we know that the combination of oo pronounce [u] in English, and oo is very similar to the two eyes of an animal. Therefore, translating 龙 into loong is a very good translation of the dragon, not only in graphy, but also in the pronunciation. So the form of loong is a good translation [9].

2) The tips of hyponymy

All of people whether the Chinese or the English live on the same planet-earth. So we share the resources the earth provides for us, because these things are more or less similar. As a result we can find words for the most part in another language corresponding to any primary word in one's own native language. But as there is infinite number of things in our world, if we use infinite words to express infinite things, it is impossible, because it is a big burden for us to memorize all of words, so we need to classify the things, that is to say things must be grouped together to form classes which consist of groups stand for a much wider range of things than the word standing for the basic kinds. And the hyponymy is a good example of people grouping things. Hyponymy refers to the sense relation between a more general, more inclusive word and a more specific word. The word which is more general in meaning is called the superordinate, and the more specific words are called its hyponym. Hyponyms of the same superordinate are co-homonyms to each other. Of course the phenomenon of hyponymy exists in all of language both in English and Chinese, but because the Chinese and the English has different cognition to the objective world, so they have different classifications, which greatly influence on the translation. For instance: how to translate 你有几只笔 into English, to be honest this translation is more difficult, because we can find pen, pencil and ballpoint in English but we can't find a word can express 笔, because there isn't the superordinate of pen in English, you can clearly see the distinctions as follows:

	汉语	英语
上义词	笔	没有
下义词	铅笔	Pencil
	钢笔	Pen

These are common lexeme gaps between English and Chinese. Under this situation, there are two translation methods:

A: language is so creative that we can use the finite words to express some lacking words, in this way 笔 can be translated into writing instrument.

B: there is another different case, using the above method, we can't express the lexeme gap, under this situation, and we should trace its development from history.

For instance, how to translate 羊年 into English, in English we have some words relatively with the Chinese character 羊 such as sheep and goat, but which one is suitable to express 羊, in order to have a better translation, we should trace the history to find out was the first domesticated 羊 in China a sheep or goat, but nowadays many archaeologists are not sure, anyway this is a good direction for us to think about it. Another perspective for this translation is what we all know that our Chinese character belongs to pictograph, that is to say ancient Chinese characters were based on images, but is impossible to create characters to represent all of the things and people in the world, some are simplified pictures based on images like 火川, 山; some are based on part of the image, in this way 羊 is a good example, because it empathizes the most prominent features of 羊, that is horn. So let us see the appearance of the sheep and goat, the most difference is that almost all adult goats have horns, but most sheep have no horns, so from the features of our Chinese characters we can find the ancient 羊 is based on the goat, because goat have 2 horns. Besides we can look at the sculptures and paintings used in ancient China to represent 羊 in the Chinese zodiac, which is clear that in the twelve animal heads of the old Summer Palace, the goat other than the sheep inside of them. So the better translation of 羊年 should be translated into the goat year.

3) The tips of meronymy

English speakers prefer analytical thinking, while the Chinese prefer comprehensive thinking, so this distinction is also reflected in the vocabulary, and meronymy is a typical example of this distinction. Meronymy refers to the semantic relation that holds between a part and the whole. Because our Chinese people prefer the comprehensive thinking, so we use a lot of words that belong to the whole, but the British are more rational, so their usage and vocabulary are more logical than us. For example, the Chinese characters 手 belongs to a concept of wholeness, however, fingers(手指), wrists 手腕, and fists (拳头) are all the part of the hand, but when our Chinese people communicate with others, we prefer to choose the words that can express the whole concept, but the Birth are totally different with us, let us see the follow sentences:

1. 他手里拿着个杯子

He is holding a cup in his hand.

2. 你瞧他手上戴的那块瑞士表。

Look at the Swiss watch on his wrist.

3. 今天我忘记带筷子, 只好请大家用手了。

I forgot to bring chopsticks today. You have to use your fingers,

4. 君子动口不动手。

A gentle man uses his tongue but not his fists.

In the first sentence, the Chinese character 手 are corresponding to the English word hand, but the following sentences the Chinese character 手 are not corresponding to the English word hand, because our Chinese people use the word hand other than our wrist, but we all know that the watch should be worn on our wrist, not on our hands, and the the third sentence, our Chinese people use hand other than fingers, but it is well known that when we have a meal, we should use our fingers to touch the food, not our hand. As well as the last sentence, when we fight with others, we use our fists, not our hands. So from the above sentence, we can clearly see that our Chinese people would like to use the words that can express a concept of wholeness. While the British are very rational they usually choose some words that depend on the fact. Therefore, in the process of translation, we should notice this distinction, which can avoid a poor express. When we do some translations about English into Chinese. For example, when we translate the last two sentences, we should avoid a poor expression like this, 今天我忘记带筷子, 只好请大家用手指头了。君子动口不动拳头。 Although we can understand those sentences very well, our native speakers do not use these expressions. So when we translate above sentences, we should notice this distinction.

4) The tips of synonyms

We can surely conclude that there are no two totally same words in the world, every language has groups of synonyms, but there do not exist in any language two lexeme that are of exactly the same meaning, that is to say there are non-absolute synonyms, because if a word can express the meaning, we need not to create a new word to express the same meaning which increase the burden for us to memorize too much words, so the emergence of synonyms in order to express and describe minute, subtle or delicate differences and variations in meanings, including degrees and levels, tones, registers, styles, and commendation or derogation. A large number of synonyms also cause difficulties in translation. For example, the Chinese word 爸爸 and 父亲, the former is more colloquial, the latter is more formal. This type is easy for us to identify, and we can find the corresponding words in English that are dad and father.

But there are more complex words for us to translate, for example, in Chinese, the synonymous of 眼 refers to 目, both the classical Chinese word 目 and the vernacular word 眼 refer to the organ of sight, but their meanings and usage differ in many ways, when we refer to the eye, we usually use the Chinese character (眼 or 眼睛), we can see it in the under cases, such as in 眼球, 眼皮, 眨眼, 眼花, 眼中钉肉中刺, 睁一只眼闭一只眼, etc, we say 眼科 rather than 目科, 目击 rather than 眼击, in a sense, the classical word 目 contains a more abstract meaning than the commonly used word 眼睛/眼. In order to have a better translation, we can also use the corpus to find some words of co-existence. All of these instances are a result of language development, as the Chinese written language has more than five thousand years of history, there is classical as well as vernacular Chinese influence, under this situation, the translator needs to exercise discretion in understanding subtle or delicate differences in the wording of the source text so as to find the most proper word in the target language. Should he fail to find any at all, the translator should take accommodation to bring out the specific meaning of originals? Special attention should be paid to the fact that some synonyms in one language may no longer be synonymous in another language. In this process, we should always remember the context is the only criteria in judging all translations. This phenomenon is also found in English. For instance, Chinese word 笑 means different manners to laugh, but in English, there are many different words to express all kinds of ways to laugh, such as giggle (咯咯出声笑), sneer (冷笑), smile (微笑), chortle (哈哈大笑), titter (傻笑), snigger (暗笑), all of these words are translated into Chinese should use the form like this: "manner + 笑" we can clearly see it as follows:

English word	Chinese word	conclusion
grin	露齿而笑	露齿+笑
guffaw	狂笑	狂+笑
Smirk	得意的笑	得意+笑

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, in order to be an excellent translator, we must have two kinds of cultural awareness and be really proficient in the languages of the two countries, so that translation can truly become a bridge of communication. After all, in the process of translation, it is not only a simple translation of words, but also excavate the cultural meaning behind words, so that translation can be accurate, so we must read a lot to cultivate English thinking, Chinese thinking, can be unconsciously influenced to improve our bilingual level, make due contributions to English-Chinese communication.

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