

Exploration of English Translation Paths from the Perspective of Cross-Cultural Communication

Jingquan Huang

Guangzhou College of Commerce, Guangzhou 511363, Guangdong, China

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Abstract: As a crucial bridge for addressing issues in Sino-Western cultural exchanges, English translation plays a positive role in establishing close cooperative relationships between countries. If we can accurately grasp the cultural differences among various countries and utilize scientific translation techniques and appropriate translation methods, we can effectively eliminate language barriers, promote in-depth communication and integration between different cultures—and this is particularly important for building an international environment where diverse cultures coexist. Based on this, this paper briefly expounds on the impact of cross-cultural communication on English translation. On this basis, it summarizes and proposes effective English translation paths from the perspective of cross-cultural communication, aiming to make a modest contribution to promoting multicultural exchanges, while providing useful insights and new perspectives for English translation under the framework of cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: Cross-cultural communication; English translation; Effective paths

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1. Introduction

In the 21st century, with the acceleration of globalization, exchanges and interactions between countries have become increasingly close. For this reason, cross-cultural communication has gradually become the focus of international attention. As an extremely important international lingua franca, English plays an increasingly prominent role in cross-cultural communication. It should be noted that English translation from the perspective of cross-cultural communication is not a mechanical conversion of one language into another; instead, it should comprehensively consider factors such as the cultural backgrounds of both parties and contextual differences. Only in this way can the accuracy and appropriateness of translation be ensured, and more importantly, a bridge can be built for the integration and development of cultures, making the world's cultures rich and colorful. From this perspective, the research in this paper, which focuses on English translation from the perspective of cross-cultural communication, holds profound significance and value.

2. The impact of cross-cultural communication on English translation

2.1. Cultural diversity

Every country possesses a unique cultural heritage and profound historical accumulation, which collectively shape the

way its people think, behave, and perceive values, leading to distinctly different cultural expression styles. For instance, Chinese culture has long emphasized the concept of “harmony as the most precious” (以和为贵), advocating for harmonious coexistence and the joint building of a better society; in contrast, Western culture promotes individualism, free competition, and direct expression. It is precisely for this reason that cultural differences have gradually emerged, posing significant challenges to English translation. Take the Chinese cultural symbol of “龙” (long) as an example—it is traditionally associated with meanings like “auspiciousness” and “nobility,” and its common English equivalent is “dragon.” When an enterprise includes “龙” in its advertisements, translators often directly render it as “dragon” to highlight the product’s strength and help the enterprise establish a majestic image. However, they may be unaware that in Western culture, “dragon” is typically seen as a symbol of evil. Failing to account for such cultural differences in translation can lead to the advertisement having the opposite effect of what was intended, and may even bring negative impacts to the enterprise. From the above, it is evident that cultural differences between countries and regions are inevitable. On one hand, these differences increase the difficulty and complexity of English translation; on the other hand, they also create favorable opportunities for English translation by providing a rich and diverse range of materials. Therefore, English translation should not overlook the impact of cultural diversity, but rather maintain an attitude of understanding and respect. Only in this way can cultural integration be promoted, and can we contribute to building a promising, diverse, and harmonious global cultural landscape^[1].

2.2. Context dependence

Context specifically refers to the specific environment or background in which language is used. It encompasses various factors, such as the time, place, and occasion of the language activity, as well as the identity and relationship of the participants. Additionally, it may also involve elements like cultural background and psychological state. These factors do not exist in isolation; instead, they are intertwined and interact with one another, resulting in the complexity and diversity of context. Studies have shown that the same language may convey significantly different meanings when used in different contexts—let alone when cross-cultural barriers are involved. People from different cultural backgrounds exhibit distinct differences in their ways of thinking, expression habits, beliefs, and values. Consequently, even when faced with the same object or sentence, they may form completely different understandings and reactions. A simple example is the color “red”: in Chinese culture, it is often a symbol of “auspiciousness,” “joy,” and “enthusiasm.” However, in some Western cultures, it may be associated with concepts like “danger,” “anger,” and “warning.” Precisely because the meaning of “color” varies greatly across different cultural contexts, ambiguities are likely to arise during translation, and in some cases, this may even lead to mistranslations^[2].

2.3. Differences in values

With the increasing prosperity of global culture, in addition to distinct differences in cultural backgrounds, people’s values also exhibit diversity due to factors such as nationality and region. As diverse values gradually penetrate into fields like politics and ethics, people’s ways of thinking and behavioral patterns are also undergoing changes. These significant differences in values present immense challenges to English translation. In essence, English translation is not a mechanical conversion of words; instead, it should comprehensively take into account factors such as emotion and culture. When English translation involves different cultural backgrounds, translators must possess solid professional competence and maintain a high level of cultural sensitivity. This ensures that the translation can accurately and appropriately convey the connotation of values in the original expression to the target audience, thereby achieving cultural resonance.

3. Effective approaches to English translation from the perspective of cross-cultural communication

3.1. Respecting cultural differences

With the acceleration of globalization, cross-cultural communication has become increasingly frequent, and its importance has gradually become prominent. As a crucial bridge for cross-cultural communication and information transmission, English translation relies on translators to gain in-depth understanding of the cultural backgrounds of different countries and regions and always maintain an attitude of understanding and respecting cultural differences. Only in this way can the integration and mutual communication of cultures be truly achieved. However, from the perspective of cross-cultural communication, the primary challenge in English translation is the semantic loss caused by cultural gaps. Although literal translation can convey the original meaning, it often fails to express the in-depth connotation of the source text and hardly evokes emotional resonance among the target language audience. This requires translators to deeply understand and respect cultural differences to ensure the accurate transmission of information through translation. To achieve this goal, first and foremost, translators should fully engage themselves in systematic learning and research, with a focus on studying the similarities and differences in ways of thinking, expression habits, and other aspects caused by cultural disparities between China and the West. This requires translators to not only master the accurate vocabulary conversion skills but also gain a profound understanding of the logical thinking behind the language. Moreover, translators should comprehensively understand the pragmatic context of English and familiarize themselves with its social customs, historical background, and other related aspects as much as possible. Only in this way can they effectively avoid semantic deviations and prevent incidents of cultural misunderstanding. Second, translators should learn to think from a different perspective. In other words, during the translation process, they should promptly step out of their own cultural framework and try to think from the perspective of target language users. On this basis, they should organize the language in a reasonable manner to achieve the goal of accurate translation. In this way, the translated text can also be more recognized by the target audience. Third, translators should possess a strong awareness of cross-cultural communication. The essence of English translation is not merely language conversion, but building a bridge for cultural exchange. As important envoys of cross-cultural communication and dissemination, translators should not only actively complete translation tasks but also take the initiative to undertake the responsibility of cultural dissemination, play a vital role as a bridge for cultural exchange, and contribute their modest efforts to truly realizing cultural integration and positive interaction^[3].

3.2. Skillfully using image contrast

Traditional culture has rich connotations, making its translation quite challenging. If literal translation is simply adopted, the charm and aesthetic feeling of the source text will often be lost, and problems such as the absence of cultural essence may eventually arise. Language is not only a typical social phenomenon but also a symbol of culture with unique regional characteristics, serving as an important carrier for cultural inheritance. Some English words may contain strong Western cultural attributes due to the influence of traditional cultural environments. If their cultural backgrounds are ignored during translation, the translated text will not only be rigid and obscure but may also lose the original meaning, thus affecting the translation effect. Therefore, English translation should not be separated from the cultural context. Translators must carefully analyze the differences between Chinese and English cultural images during translation and properly balance the relationship between the two to ensure the aesthetic feeling of the translated text and enhance the artistic expression of English translation. For example, when translating the line “Mulan, your serpentine salvation is at hand” from the classic Disney animated film *Mulan*, the translator should skillfully apply the image contrast translation technique to strive for no change in the original context while enhancing the artistic expression of the translation. Thus, this English line can be translated into Chinese as “木兰，你的贴身护卫来了。” The phrase “serpentine salvation” in this line originates from a classic story in the Christian Bible and is understood as “twisted salvation” in the Western cultural context. If a simple literal translation is used, rendering the line directly as “木兰，你的救赎来了。”，Chinese audiences will inevitably be confused, and such a translation will seem rather rigid. To accurately convey the original meaning, the translator can

closely connect with the creative background of the classic Chinese folk story *Mulan*, carefully consider the reason why *Mulan* joined the army in place of her father in ancient times, and adopt the cultural image contrast method to flexibly adapt the structure and content of the original text. In this way, the translated text will not only be more in line with the emotional cognition of the target audience, vividly reflect the historical and cultural backgrounds but also further highlight the artistic charm of English translation through language exchange and integration. It can truly demonstrate the profound cultural connotation of the source text, make cross-cultural communication smoother and more convenient, and significantly improve the quality of English translation^[4].

3.3. Skillful use of image conversion

English translation should not only ensure that the target text is relatively easy to understand, but also focus on conveying cultural connotations. Naturally, this must be based on understanding and respecting the cultural differences between China and the West. This requires English translators to break through the constraints of cultural context as much as possible, which also means that translators should deeply understand and recognize the subtle differences between the cultures of the source language and the target language. They should flexibly adopt the method of image conversion, not rigidly adhering to fixed translation models, but reasonably changing based on specific cultural images. In this way, the distance between different cultures can be shortened, cultural barriers can be eliminated as much as possible, and the target text can be more approachable. In the translation process, translators can try the strategy of “localizing” Western cultural images, so as to make the target text easy to understand and more in line with the thinking and cultural habits of Chinese people. For example, the exclamation “Oh, my God.” is extremely common in Western film, television and literary works. If it is directly translated as “哦，我的上帝。” (Oh, my God), it not only does not conform to the expression habits of Chinese audiences, but may also make them feel unfamiliar and difficult to understand, directly affecting the translation quality. This is because it is difficult to find a cultural image corresponding to “God” in traditional Chinese culture, so such a translation appears rigid and out of touch with daily life. Therefore, when translating “Oh, my God.”, translators can skillfully connect with images familiar to Chinese people and, based on the specific cultural background, translate it as “我的老天爷呀！” (Oh, my goodness!) or “天呐！” (Oh, heavens!). Such translations can better convey the “surprise” emotion in the original text, making it more acceptable to Chinese audiences and more in line with their language expression habits. Audiences can understand the text more naturally and smoothly, and more importantly, this can further highlight the inclusiveness and openness of translated works in cultural communication. It can be seen that the application of the image conversion method makes English translations closer to the daily lives of the audience, helps deepen the depth of cross-cultural communication, and truly realizes the interconnection, integration and mutual penetration of languages and cultures^[5].

3.4. Emphasis on contextual analysis

When translating a sentence or a paragraph, it should not be taken out of context; instead, translators should closely connect it with the context and focus on contextual analysis. This not only ensures the accuracy of the translation, but also makes it conform to the specific context. Specifically, first of all, when dealing with the original text, translators must avoid word-for-word translation. Instead, they should deeply understand the potential meaning of each word in the text and carefully analyze its role in the entire article. For example, the word “run” has completely different meanings when placed in different contexts. “He is running a marathon” can be translated as “他在参加马拉松” (He is participating in a marathon), while in “The program is running smoothly”, “run” does not refer to the traditional meaning of “running” (physical movement); instead, it means that the program is operating smoothly and normally. It can be seen that only by closely connecting English translation with the context and placing it in a specific context can translators endow words with vitality. Secondly, English translation should not be separated from specific occasions. When translating, translators should flexibly adjust the style and wording of the target text according to the occasion. Generally speaking, in formal diplomatic occasions, English translation should follow the principles of “rigor” and “solemnity”; in relatively relaxed

family gatherings, however, the target text should be more colloquial and humorous. In this way, the translation will not appear abrupt, be easier to understand, and thus make cross-cultural communication more natural and smooth.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, from the perspective of cross-cultural communication, English translation not only builds a bridge for communication between different cultures, but also provides a link for in-depth communication between countries and regions. English translation from the perspective of cross-cultural communication should attach particular importance to the cultural differences between China and the West. On the premise of respecting cultural differences, translators should skillfully use image comparison, make clever use of image conversion, and attach importance to contextual analysis. Only in this way can the accuracy and fluency of the target text be ensured, the depth and breadth of cross-cultural communication be expanded, and the important bridging role of English translation in cross-cultural communication be truly exerted, laying a solid foundation for promoting the mutual integration and coexistence of world cultures.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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