

# Local Cultural characteristics in English Translation

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**Abstract:** Local culture is a complex phenomenon, which contains very rich content. In intercultural communication, there are differences between Chinese and Anglo-American countries in terms of cultural languages. In English translation, it is necessary to embody local cultural characteristics for language bears culture and culture is rooted in language, each of which reflects the various cultural characteristics of a nation. Because of the different geographical environments, historical cultures and local customs, different countries have formed their unique and distinctive cultures. In College English translation teaching, we should pay attention to the influence of cultural factors on the quality of education and teaching, strengthen the exploration and mastery of cultural factors, and incorporate local cultural characteristics into English translation in order to make translation more accurate. In line with the true meaning and expression of ideas, the comprehensive quality of English translation is improved, so as to ensure the rapid improvement of students' translation skills.

**Keywords:** english translation; cultural factors; language; local customs; concepts

## 1. Introduction

With the continuous implementation and deepening of our country's policy of opening to the outside world, English, as a widely used language of communication and transplantation, has gradually attracted people's attention. College English translation is an important subject in College English teaching, which plays a weight-lifting role in English education. As a continuous integration of local culture, College English translation teaching has put forward higher requirements in College English translation education. We should pay attention to the influence of cultural factors on the quality of education and teaching, strengthen the excavation and mastery of cultural factors, and actively understand the contents of local cultural characteristics, which will greatly improve the quality and cultural connotation of English translation<sup>[1]</sup> in an attempt to make English translation meet the standard of "letter, reach, elegant". For a long time, people think that learning language is the form of learning language. In grammar and vocabulary learning, it seems that people have to use the source language for communication, and then translate it into its target language. However, in the practical intercultural communication, we find that it is necessary to embody the local cultural characteristics in English translation and learn to integrate English translation into the application of local culture while mastering its language form and usage rules. In translation practice, through learning, understanding and continuous practice, combining with the differences of local cultural characteristics, English translation teaching and practice are carried out to improve the cultural awareness of college students and promote their all-round development<sup>[2-4]</sup>. This paper analyzes and dis-

cusses the local cultural characteristics in College English translation in China, points out the present situation of cultural consciousness in our College English translation, strengthens the exploration and mastery of cultural factors, and incorporates local cultural characteristics into English translation, so as to make translation more accurate and more in line with the true meaning and expression of ideas. According to the present situation of local cultural characteristics in English translation, some reasonable teaching suggestions are put forward.

## 2. Analysis of Local Cultural Factors in English Translation

Language is an important means and mode for people to communicate with each other, it is also the carrier of history and culture. It will play a very positive role in College English translation. English is the main language of western countries<sup>[5]</sup>. English contains a lot of cultural factors, such as nationality, region, history, religion and so on. Therefore, the relationship between English and cultural factors should be viewed correctly in the course of practical teaching. To understand the cultural factors in College English translation and to cultivate students' interest in learning cultural factors can promote students' learning competence<sup>[6]</sup>.

### 2.1. Embodiment of local cultural factors in English translation

As far as English translation teaching in China is concerned, teachers and students pay less attention to local cultural awareness, and often only pay attention to learning and mastering English knowledge, but not from the perspective of local cultural characteristics, to understand

the real meaning of English and help oneself to grasp the deep meaning and application skills. Therefore, to learn a language well, we should not only master its language forms and usage rules, but also learn how to use it under its cultural background. Yet the current English translation makes it difficult to improve the quality of College English translation teaching in China<sup>[7-11]</sup>. The factors of local cultural characteristics have a very important influence on English translation, and it also reflects in the process of English translation, which affects the quality and effectiveness of English translation.

## **2.2. Expression of local cultural characteristics in English translation**

As an important means of communication, English has gradually formed a unique application system due to the influence of geographical, ethnic and local factors in the long history of its development. There are great differences in expressions and sentence patterns in English translation. For example, in English words, many nouns have more meanings, such as cry, net, Internet, kiddies (children, goats) and so on. The meanings of such words differ greatly from sentence to sentence. In the process of practical learning, we should pay attention to the understanding and mastery of their relevant cultural factors, and interpret the meaning of sentence patterns from the perspective of cultural factors. In the practice of English translation, it is necessary to combine the specific context with reasonable analysis and local cultural characteristics in order to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of its translation<sup>[12]</sup>.

## **2.3. Embodiment of history and allusions in English translation**

Language bears culture, and culture is rooted in language. Each language reflects the various cultural characteristics of a nation. Different values lead to great differences in people's views and opinions on things<sup>[13]</sup>. We should pay attention to the influence on the local cultural characteristics and linguistic background factors and analyze the English cultural factors combined with the local cultural characteristics so as to make the translation more accurate and more in line with the true meaning and expression of ideas. For instance, in ancient China, the dragon is regarded as an auspicious omen; but in the West, the dragon was a very evil and terrible animal, so in the actual translation process, we should attach importance to the cultural and historical differences between the East and the West, and combine the cultural differences of different countries with the differences of local cultures, in order to ensure the practical effect of English translation.

## **3. English Translation from the Perspective of Local Culture**

In English translation, local cultural factors are of great significance in English translation teaching. People from the same cultural background can quickly resonate in communication, or they can quickly reach a tacit understanding because they have a common language, and common social and historical experiences. Because of the different geographical environments, historical cultures, local customs, different countries have formed their distinct and distinctive cultures<sup>[14]</sup>. Inevitably, such significant cultural differences affects translation to various degrees. Here we are to discuss the impact of cultural differences on translation from the following aspects.

### **3.1. Impact of natural environmental differences on translation**

Each nation lives in a different natural environment, and this kind of different and specific natural environment will influence each nation's view of the same thing or phenomenon, and then give the specific meaning of its words<sup>[15]</sup>. For example, Britain is an island country, and the people of which enjoy sailing; while China is located inside the mainland and has been a nation since ancient times, so in comparison to wasting money, English uses "spend money like water". In Chinese, it is "spend money like soil".

### **3.2. Influence of local cultural differences on translation**

Customs and habits involve various fields, so the differences between English and Chinese customs and habits are first reflected in the terms of address as well. For instance, there are few appellations in English, such as dad, mum, grandpa, aunt, uncle, and in many cases, they are often called by their first names. Different from the West, China has been a state of etiquette since ancient times, paying attention to the order of growth and order, so the distinction in terms of address is very strict, sometimes a term of which may have a variety of names. For example, "wife" in Chinese has the meanings of both "wife" and "lover", and so forth; but in English there is only one name "wife". In addition, because of the differences in social etiquette, the Chinese and Western answers to the same question also have significant differences, Westerners like to tell the truth, while the Chinese like to speak more courteously though they also lay stress on honesty. As for a gift taking, Westerners usually accept it more frankly and say "Thank you!" and/or "I like it very much." while the Chinese might say "why bother". When they hear praise, Westerners most of the cases will embrace it and say Thank you, while the Chinese say "where" and so on. Due to the differences in customs and habits, translators should be flexible in translation according to the actual situations.

### 3.3. Impact of religious differences on translation

The differences of religious beliefs between English and Chinese are mainly manifested in two aspects: advocate and taboo. As we all know, Christianity is the religion that most Westerners worship. Christian believers believe that God created the world and that everything in the world is arranged according to God's will. In China, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism are the three major religions that have a profound influence on the Chinese people. In traditional Chinese culture, there are "Jade Emperor" in Taoism, "Dragon King" in mythology and "Heaven" which dominates nature. Such significant religious differences permeate into their language and will inevitably influence the speech of such a language. For instance: the sentence "He was in the seventh heaven last night." is equal in meaning to the sentence "He was very happy last night." because the phrase "(be) in the seventh heaven" means "(be) happy!" But owing to a lack of understanding its religious meaning, many people often associate in the seventh heaven with concepts such as "to ascend" and "to die", but not the meaning of "happiness". The seven-fold sky actually refers to the highest level of the heaven in which God and angels dwell. If one could live there, he or she would be with God, and it would be a great pleasure for him or her. Therefore, in the translating process of a sentence like this, we cannot neglect the impact of religious differences on our translation.

## 4. Translation Methods under Cultural Differences

Translation, as an important part of a language, is a key bridge between world politics, economy and culture. Because of the influence of cultural factors, translation is not merely an activity to transform one language into another, but also the transplantation and communication between different cultures. According to the differences of local cultures, this paper mainly introduces some practical ways of dealing with intercultural differences as follows.

### 4.1. Literal translation

Literal translation is to use the corresponding words in the translation of the cultural information from the original text into its target language. The method of literal translation can preserve the cultural characteristics of the original text to the maximum extent and make the reader fully understand its cultural connotation.

### 4.2. Free translation

In many cases, the culture-specific words in the source language cannot be expressed in the target language, thus the method of free translation can be adopted. Free translation is to express the meaning of the original text accu-

rately in the form of interpretation. The translation of meaning is not confined to the form of the original text, emphasizing the "god resemblance", which inevitably leads to the absence of part of the cultural image of the original text. Taking "Greek gift" as an example which is originated from Greek mythology, meaning "conspiracy to harm"—if it is literally translated as "this is a Greek gift to you", the cultural meaning will disappear and Chinese readers will find it difficult to understand its meaning.

### 4.3. Conversion translation

As mentioned above, because of the differences in one's history, culture, customs and religious beliefs, different peoples have different understandings of the same thing or phenomenon. Some things in one language have rich cultural connotations and can cause rich associations, but in its target language, there might not always have any or the same or similar cultural connotations. In this case, the method of conversion translation can be adopted, that is, the words with cultural color in the source language can be replaced by the words with the same cultural color in the target language. This method is often used in the translation of idioms or figurative words which can be reflected their huge and significant differences in English and Chinese cultures in nearly all aspects. Such differences have brought great difficulties to translation and become the main obstacle to the smooth progress of translation. Therefore, in their translating from English into Chinese, or from Chinese into English, the translators should not only master the language and culture of their own, but also have a deep understanding of the cultures of their target language and its people, and be aware of the differences between their own and foreign cultures as well.

From the discussion above, we can easily come to an agreement that no matter what we translate, we need to adopt appropriate translation methods to accurately convey the cultural connotations of the original text into their target languages.

## 5. Suggestions on Application of Local cultural features in English Translation

### 5.1. To raise cultural awareness

In the course of daily teaching, teachers should make account of cultural factors, and improve the cultural awareness of College English translation, so that students can pay adequate attention to and better understand cultural factors in their process of learning so as to promote the quality of English translation learning. As far as College English translation learning in China is concerned, teachers and students are lacking in cultural awareness. Quite a number of our students only attach importance to the study and mastery of grammar and vocabulary, but do

not have a thorough understanding of the cultural factors in vocabulary and sentence structures. Therefore, it is necessary to improve teachers' and students' cultural concepts and enhance their cultural awareness. In the course of daily teaching, the teacher should make a reasonable supplement to the relevant knowledge and contents, and carry out related analysis activities to the sentence structures and culture-loaded vocabulary, which are quite different between Chinese and Western cultures, so that students can discuss the cultural factors in English. Therefore, students might attach importance to their cultural awareness, enable them to actively understand and study cultural factors, and promote rapidly students' English translation competence.

### 5.2. To build a cultural atmosphere and strengthen the construction of the teaching staff

In order to better students' understanding of English cultural factors, teachers should pay adequate attention to the application of some appropriate teaching methods in the daily teaching process, strengthen the reform of teaching mode, create a good learning atmosphere for students and improve the English translation level of students significantly. Before the class starts, the teacher can broadcast a relevant video of classical foreign literature through multimedia technology according to the actual contents and requirements of the teaching. During students' watching of the video, the teacher needs to actively offer some timely guide to the students. We can first let the students actively explore the video-related vocabulary and sentence patterns of different applications and expressions to stimulate their interest in exploration. Then, the teachers and students can work together to carry out classroom discussions on the relevant questions, and actively search and apply the relevant materials, so that the students can strengthen their enthusiasm for the cultural factors of English translation in the process of answering the questions. Thus a good learning atmosphere can be constructed for students. At the same time, the school should also strengthen the teaching staff construction, and guarantee the related work smoothly. In their daily teaching, schools should attach importance to the introduction of talents, improve the cultural level of teachers, and hold regular academic seminars so as to strengthen the exchanges and communication of advanced teaching methods and to ensure the effective improvement of teachers' overall competence in education and promote the smooth development of College English translation teaching. In addition, it is necessary to lay great store on the construction of teaching materials in order to compile in line with the modern situation.

## 6. Conclusions

As mentioned above, the local cultural factors play an important role in the teaching of English translation. We

should not only consider the history, social background, but also set store by those English words with different connotations. In English translation, the understanding and mastery of cultural factors and connotations can make English translation much closer to its original meaning. The practical significance is to reflect the local cultural characteristics in English translation, to improve the comprehensive quality of English translation, to ensure the rapid promotion of the students' translation level, to master the differences between China and the English-speaking countries' cultural conventions and their language conventions, to build a good cultural atmosphere, and to make the translator master the various social, historical and cultural backgrounds related to the language. Different countries are characterized with their unique and distinctive cultures, so we should pay adequate attention to the impact of cultural factors in our College English translation teaching, better master the cultural characteristics of both the original and the target languages so as to make more accurate translation and rapidly improve students' competence in their translation.

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