

# Research on German Translation from a Cross-cultural Perspective

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**Abstract:** Translation is a kind of cross-cultural propagation process and communication activity. When there is culture, there will be cultural propagation. The propagation of foreign cultures belongs to cross-language propagation and must be achieved through translation. It can be said that without translation, there will be no propagation of foreign cultures, and various cultures cannot be better integrated and developed. Whether it was the Renaissance in Europe or the spread of Western learning in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, they all fully explained the huge effects yielded by translation in the development of social culture.

**Keywords:** German Translation; Cross-cultural Perspective

**Publication date:** January, 2021

**Publication online:** 31 January, 2021

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Translation in essence is one of human's practical activities, and the nature of practice is creation. In the process of cultural translation, it mainly reflects the translator's abstract thinking, image thinking, and emotional participation etc. As a practical activity, translation plays an important role in cultural communication. Translation is a cross-cultural behavior and a communicative action. In the process of translation, translators should not incorporate their own personal emotions, but insist on an objective translation attitude, and translate the original text accurately and completely. No language is composed of simple words and sentences. It is the long-term deposition of the history and culture of the nation that uses this language. Therefore, the translation of two cultures is not just a simple conversion of words,

terms, and sentences, but also a cultural migration and conversion. In simpler terms, translation is using a language to faithfully and comprehensively express what another language wants to express. Translation uses the most appropriate equivalent first from the aspect of semantics, and secondly, from the aspect of style, to show the information of the original language again. Culture has strong national, regional and contemporary characteristics. At the same time, culture also needs to be spread and developed. The best way to spread and develop is to spread in foreign countries. Therefore, according to the characteristics of cultural propagation and development, cultural translation activities must be carried out. The concept of "translation behavior" put forward by Mantali defines translation activities as "complex behaviors designed to achieve the cross-cultural communication of information". Therefore, it is not difficult to see that the essence of translation is cross-cultural communication and exchange. Translation is regarded as a cross-language conversion activity. It is better to regard cultural translation as a cultural communication and development activity. Only by eliminating the differences between cultures through translation can we better understand its cultural connotations.

## 1 The Relationship between Translation and Cross-cultural Propagation

### 1.1 The Characteristics of Translation and Cross-cultural Propagation

Translation has the general characteristics of cross-cultural communication, but it differs from ordinary communication in that translation takes place between two cultures. The translator needs to change the code

of the culture without changing the language symbol system in the culture. Since translation is a kind of cross-cultural information dissemination, it must be related to cross-cultural communication.

The main links are shown in the following aspects: (1) Translation activities and cross-cultural communication are inseparable from language and symbols. To be exact, the core of cross-cultural communication is information, which is the flow of information. Once culture is produced, it needs to spread. All languages and symbols can only gain value and meaning in the process of propagation. Translation activities also require language and symbols; its dependence on language and symbols is higher than other factors. Translation activities cannot proceed without symbols and language. (2) Translation activities and cross-cultural communication are interactive and two-way processes of cultural information exchange and sharing. There are two main types of interactions in cultural communication and exchange, namely the one-way interaction without feedback and two-way interaction with feedback. Culture is dynamic and in continuous propagation. At the same time, culture is diverse, which determines that cultural communication cannot be closed and one-way. Therefore, it can be proved that translation activities and cross-cultural activities have the same characteristics, that is, interactivity.

## **1.2 The Purpose and Strategy of Translation**

There are eight elements in cross-cultural communication: communicator, information, communication media, audience, communication effect, communication purpose, communication environment, and communication method. As the main method of cross-cultural communication, translation activities must also have these eight elements. These connections fully explain translation's nature and properties of cross-cultural communication. In general, cross-cultural communication is inseparable from translation activities, and translation activities are cross-cultural communication. The purpose of translation activities is to allow the translated content to better express the original content in the source culture so that readers who do not understand the original text can understand the thoughts of the original text through the translated text, and emphasize the importance of translation activities for cultural communication and

promotion of cultural development.

## **2 Analysis of Influencing Factors of German Translation from the Cross-cultural Perspective**

### **2.1 Differences in Thinking Modes in German Translation**

We all live in the same world, but we have different cultural backgrounds, different environments, and different views and understandings on different things. Our understanding of Westerners is usually that they are more rational and objective in their analysis, insights, and logical order dealing with issues, while Chinese have a comprehensive way of thinking, and focus more on the symbolic and subjective meaning of things. The ancient language expressions in China were all firm in meaning but loose in form, especially as the subject is often omitted in the Chinese language. In German translation, in order to avoid the fragmentation of sentences, the translation needs to restructure the language system of German language characteristics and German cultural thinking. Compared with the study of Chinese language, German pays more attention to the logic in expressing thoughts.

### **2.2 Differences in Religious Culture between the Chinese and Western Societies**

Religion is the origin and core of culture. In Western countries, Christianity has a far-reaching influence, and it is also the carrier of Western culture, while traditional Chinese religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism have a major influence on Chinese culture. Chinese religious culture derives various social aspects such as philosophy, ethics, and literature, which are also an indispensable part of our culture.

### **2.3 Differences between Chinese and Western Traditional Cultural Concepts**

Cultural concepts are quite different in Chinese and Western countries, which leads to different ways of thinking on the same thing and different living habits and education levels of people. From a cross-cultural perspective, the meanings expressed by words are also different due to different contexts and social backgrounds. When choosing different translation methods, one must first avoid misunderstandings caused by cultural differences. This will help readers

in understanding the article, of course. Nevertheless, when it is necessary to preserve the differences in different cultures, it needs to stay close to the heritage of the original culture, and the requirements for the translation itself also need to be improved so that good literary works can be widely circulated.

#### **2.4 Differences in Chinese and Western Values**

In the civilized world of China and the West, people's ideas are mainly influenced by values, and people naturally abide by a set of standards, and different values also cause people to understand things differently. For example, in the eyes of Chinese and Westerners, the concept of individualism is completely different. In Western culture, individualism is closely related to creativity, independence, and freedom, etc., while in Chinese culture, individualism to some extent symbolizes selfishness, narrow-mindedness, and disregard for the interests of others.

Every nation and country has its own cultural form, and cultural differences or "divisions" will also arise because of these different cultural forms, which will obstruct the exchange of information. However, in the current era, the economy is developing rapidly. In order to keep up with the pace of the times and enter the international market, it is necessary to fully understand the cultures of all countries in the world and not "close the country". Therefore, in the process of cultural translation, appropriate foreignization is something we as translators must consider. The culture of an ethnic group can be broadened through moderate foreignization, so as to achieve the mutual integration between the cultures of various ethnic groups, and parallelize the cultural conflicts to achieve common progress. Affected by various factors such as history and geography, the culture of each country and nation has its own characteristics, so that the equivalent conversion between different cultures achieved by domestication in German translation becomes no longer so easy. Therefore, foreignization in German translation is also necessary. Domestication in German translation allows readers to realize that there are many similarities between different cultures, which make it less difficult for readers to accept. However, domestication in German translation changes the differences in a language and culture into content that is familiar to people in another language and culture, resulting in the loss of

a lot of attached information.

### **3 The "Domestication" and "Foreignization" in German Translation**

Affected by various factors such as history and geography, the culture of each country and nation has its own characteristics, so that the equivalent conversion between different cultures achieved by domestication in German translation becomes no longer so easy. Therefore, foreignization in German translation is also necessary. Domestication in German translation allows readers to realize that there are many similarities between different cultures, which makes it less difficult for readers to accept. However, domestication in German translation changes the differences in a language and culture. The qualitative components are transformed into the familiar content in another language and culture, and there is a lot of information attached.

People use domestication translation to read translated German works. In fact, this is only a review of the national culture of the own country. Moreover, the domestication in German translation prevents readers from having brand-new understanding and appreciation for the meaning of other countries and their national culture. Therefore, it is necessary to appropriately use the measurement of foreignization in German translation, so that the target readers can understand the foreign culture. Normally, this is the purpose of the readers to read the translation. Translators should believe that with readers' intelligence and imagination, the peculiarities of foreign culture are not difficult for them to understand.

The foreignization in German translation requires a thorough understanding of the original text. In some cases, if the translator is unable to have a thorough understanding of the original text and directly uses the foreignization measurement in German translation, it may hurt the original intention.

The foreignization in German translation from a cross-cultural perspective transforms the culture and language information of the original text into the culture and language of the target text in a way that almost keeps its original appearance. Therefore, it brings a whole new element to the translation and increases the foreign cultural information. The foreignization in German translation is very beneficial

to the mutual communication and penetration of two different cultures and languages, and it can promote the integration of different cultures. Through the specific translation, it can be seen that the use of the foreignization strategy in the German translation can produce a more appropriate and more expressive translation, which can fully reflect the characteristics of foreign cultures.

In addition, using foreignization in German translation from a cross-cultural perspective can also promote language development. In different languages, there are many words used to express one's specific culture. Only in a certain culture, the true meaning of these words is the clearest. Once these words go beyond their own cultural background and enter a cultural background with certain or even greater differences, translation problems are very likely to arise. Therefore, the result of translation will inevitably bring a variety of new expressions that are different from the mother tongue. At the same time, new cultural connotations have also been produced, so that the exoticism is transformed into the nativism, which reflects the "foreignization" in cross-cultural translation.

The main purpose of translation is to promote cultural exchanges, because various forms of misunderstanding may arise from cultural conflicts. On the one hand, translation must overcome language barriers, on the other hand, it must also overcome cultural barriers. Therefore, one of the very important responsibilities of a translator is to avoid cultural conflicts as much as possible. The "domesticated" translation allows ordinary readers to better understand the original text, eliminate barriers, and truly achieve the purpose of cultural exchange.

In various cultural systems, there are relative but not absolute relationships between different foreign language knowledge. Except for critical periods in crises, the traditional development of the Chinese cultural system has always emphasized internal coordination. Therefore, the mainstream culture will not only not have a strong interest in things outside the cultural system, but will hold an attitude of suspicion and distrust, and even reject them. From this point of view, in the process of translation, literary translators will unconsciously cater to the development direction of the mainstream culture and adopt the translation strategy of "domestication".

Starting from a cross-cultural perspective, the

readers of the translated text should be prioritized, and the intention of the source language information should be carefully analyzed. In essence, the translation should be the closest natural equivalent of the source language information. Dynamic equivalence is the purpose of functional equivalence, that is, the expression of the translation must be completely natural, and at the same time, the source language behavior pattern must be incorporated into the cultural scope of the target reader to the greatest extent.

Translation is an exchange between two cultures. It is a kind of cross-cultural work. It requires the expression of the translation to be attractive and seductive. At the same time, it must also respect the aesthetic level of popular culture. If the difference between the two cultures cannot be clarified, the perfect translation will not be produced. For truly successful translation, it is more important to be familiar with the two cultures than to master the two languages since words can only play a role in their cultural background. In order to make their translations vivid, appropriate, natural and decent, translators must fully understand the two cultures, appropriately apply the strategy of "domestication" based on the principle of staying faithful to the original work.

#### **4 The Social Significance of German Translation**

Translation work is unique, and its main function is to reflect social and cultural influences. Social changes and economic prosperity are closely related to translation work. In the new era of globalization, the rise of mass media has accelerated the development of cultural globalization. Translation is not only an important medium for cross-cultural communication, but also a necessary channel for cross-cultural communication of information. Therefore, in the context of globalization, German translation must break the shackles of language and literature, actively participate in the cross-cultural environment of cultural globalization, strengthen cultural exchanges and collaboration, and constantly explore the significance of German translation. In addition, translation work itself is a cross-cultural work, and the depth of German translation studies directly affects the status and influence of cultural studies. If we admit that research under the cross-cultural perspective is a new area, then the study of translation

through language organization and cultural exposition will also become an independent academic subject in its own right. Under the cross-cultural perspective, German translation research has naturally become a cross-cultural research project. All in all, translation has been a cross-cultural interpretation and communication since ancient times. In the process of human social and historical development, the function of translation is irreplaceable.

## 5 Conclusion

Every language in the world contains culture, and language is the carrier of culture. Culture influences the form and content of the language, the two are complementary and inseparable. The relationship between language and culture means that when translating between languages, we must pay attention to the differences in different regions, and in-depth study of the country's culture allows translators to experience the profound meaning of the language in the culture. In addition, translation work also carries significant energy. Translation can often inject new vital elements into the society. With the collision of global economy and culture, translation not only

affects the direction of culture, but also facilitates the expansion of new cultural thinking. All in all, translation plays an important role in the development of world civilization and is of great significance to the progress of human civilization.

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