Chinglish in Chinese-English Translation

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Abstract: English, as an international language, plays an important role in the communication between China and foreigners. However, the existence of Chinglish has a very bad effect on the quality of Chinese-English translation. So it is quite necessary to study Chinglish. To start with, this thesis introduces the definition of Chinglish on the basis of the former researches. Then, the causes of Chinglish are discussed. The thesis hopes that it can help people to improve the quality of the translation so as to communicate more effectively.

Keywords: Chinglish; Causes; Strategies

1 Introduction

Nowadays, English is the language which is the most widely used in the world. Although English has been used for many years in China, there are many problems. Translation is a rendering from one language into another with the faithful representation. As a means of communication, translation is important in human civilization. Chinglish is one of the major problems affecting the Chinese-English translation. Chinese learners of English tend to pronounce and write English in a wrong Chinese way. It cannot be accepted by the people who use English and it confuses Chinese people. Chinglish can be found in newspapers, magazines and official notices and so on. From the studies, it could be seen that most researchers have examined the nature of Chinglish from limited angles and perspectives. This is especially the case when it comes to the definition of Chinglish. Besides, they fail to give some suggestions to avoid Chinglish in the Chinese-English translation.

2 Definition of Chinglish

There are some studies and relevant writings at home and abroad, but there are not the agreements on a definition and the causes of Chinglish. Ge Chuangui is the first one to distinguish Chinglish and China English. He claimsthat: "As for China, something peculiar to China needs to be expressed orally or in written forms whether now or in the past"[1]. In his opinion, all the Chinese-English translation can be understood by the native speakers of English if we give enough explanations. But he did not mention the method to distinguish China English from Chinglish. Xie Zhijun states that there is no absolute limitation between Chinglish and China English, which is more Standard English and it is like Chinglish but with little acceptability, that is "There is no definite difference between Chinglish and China English. The only difference lies in whether it is beneficial to communication and whether it is acceptable to the native speakers"[2]. Take "*Long time no see*" for example, it is from Pidgin English and was absorbed into native English and become widely accepted.

3 Causes of Chinglish

When we have a brief knowledge of the definition of Chinglish, we are surprised that why Chinglish appears so frequently in our expressions. The author thinks that there are two factors that cause Chinglish.

3.1 Mother Tongue Interference

As International Usage concludes that Chinglish is "due mainly to mother-tongue dialect influences and

to the counting of origin of the teachers"[3]. It had been presumed that the only major source of syntactic errors in adult second language performance was the performer's first language. First language influence is not proactive inhibition, but simply the result of the performer being "called on to perform before he has learned the new behavior". The result is "padding", using old knowledge, supplying what is known to make up for what is not known.

As a learner strategy, the mother tongue interference is found to have three characteristics in adult second language acquisition.

(1) The mother tongue interference seems to be strongest in "acquisition-poor" environments.

(2) The mother tongue interference appears to be strongest in complex wordorder and in word-for-word translations of phrases[4].

3.2 Different Cultures and Thinking Modes

Language difference decides the difference of culture and thinking modes. Language and thinking have a close relationship. "The spiritual traits and the structure of the language of a people are so intimately blended that, given either of the two, one should be able to derive the other from it to the fullest extent...language is the outward manifestation of the spirit of people; their languageis their spirit and their spirit is their language; it is difficult to imagine any two things moreidentical[5]."

There exists an important figure in American anthropological linguistics-Benjamin Lee Whorf and his famous hypothesis concerning language, thought, and culture. His experience and his study of Hopi, an American Indian Language, helped him develop a unique understanding of linguistic relativity, which is widely known as the SAPIR-WHORF HYPOTHESES. The British linguist M. A. K. Halliday states that "the general term for the modifying relation is HYPOTAXIS, which is the relation between two like elements of equal status, one initiating and the other continuing"[6]. The hypothesis suggests are like this: our language helps mold our way of thinking and, consequently, different languages may probably express speakers' unique ways of understanding the world. Following this argument, an important point can be captured in this theory. Languages may determine our thinking patterns.

4 Strategies to Avoid Chinglish in Chinese – English Translation

4.1 Enriching the Knowledge of the English Culture

When globalization is becoming a fact, the cross-cultural communication is further highlighted. We have observed that more and more miscommunication occurs in international society. Carl Rogers, a great psychologist, states that real communication takes place when we listen with understanding. By analogy, we may equally say that communication collapse when we listen with misunderstanding. More specifically, we may even state that cultural stereotypes and conflicts come in when we communicate with no real understanding. As we all know, language plays a decisive role when we communicate with others but the diversity in language and culture makes cross-cultural communication a highly risky mission[7].

Intra-cultural communication is not an easy job if some basic rules are not followed. Cross-cultural communication may become a nightmare if appropriate communicative measures are not taken. Realizing these difficulties on our way to globalization, we need to know some basic principles in communication so that a healthier discourse pattern can be adopted. To provide a feasible framework, we would like to turn to Rogers and set up a tripartite model for successful communication: first, try to look at things from other persons' point of view, second, try to sense their feeling to a given issue and third try to understand their way of knowing the world.

4.2 Differentiating the Environment of English Language

In regard to Chinese non-English-major students, the input most of them receive in second language learning comes chiefly from a classroom setting. They are rarely exposed to the new language in a natural environment. In addition, in a lot of colleges and universities, compared with English-major students, who almost spend all their time in learning and studying English or English-related subjects, non-English-major students have to share their time among many other different subjects.

In most colleges and universities, the bachelor degree is geared with the certificate. Under this situation, both teachers and students are too much preoccupied by the requirement of passing the test. Because of the great imbalance of input between the first and the second languages, no matter how hard one tries to avoid using the learners' mother tongue in class, one can rarelyoverride its influence on second language learning. When it comes to language output, e.g. writing, most students would think in Chinese about what to write and then search their minds for the English equivalents. They have formed the habit of trying to write in English what they would in Chinese, which are most likely to result in Chinglish.

5 Conclusion

To sum up, Chinglish refers to the improper use of native English. Chinese use to express English with Chinese thinking modes. Chinglish is also a problem that affects the communication with English people. We recognized that if we want to speak or write English fluently, we need to speak or write English in English requirements. Although Chinglish may not be avoided completely in Chinese- English translation, we can learn valuable lessons from the mistakes.

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