Discussion on the Differences between Chinese and Western Cultures and Intercultural Translation

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Abstract: Due to different geographical backgrounds and development histories, there are certain cultural differences between China and Western countries, which often lead to cultural conflicts and seriously affect the efficiency and effectiveness of cultural exchanges. In the context of accelerating economic globalization and integration, as well as increasing cooperation among countries, in order to ensure the accuracy of translation, it is necessary to have a proficient and accurate understanding of the cultural differences between China and the West. By relying on these cultural differences, we can improve communication patterns and continuously enhance intercultural translation skills.

Keywords: Cultural differences; Intercultural translation; Skill enhancement

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the rapid development of China and more frequent communication with Western countries, intercultural translation skills are becoming more and more important. Whether translators have excellent intercultural translation skills will directly affect the competitive ability of the Chinese labor force in the international labor market. Chinese scholars have gradually realized the value and importance of this topic, and have continuously increased their research and analysis of intercultural communication, and made certain achievements in intercultural translation [1]. However, due to China's long-term focus on practical knowledge and language skills teaching, the level of humanistic education and the humanistic foundation are relatively weak and they lack a deep understanding of Chinese and Western cultures, which is prone to encounter friction and obstacles in the period of intercultural translation. Therefore, in the new era, it is necessary to strengthen the research and analysis of the cultural differences between China and the West, clearly observe the differences, and pay attention to the enhancement and training of intercultural

competence, which is of great significance for the development of our country.

2. Connotation of cultural differences

Culture, also known as "common psychological program characteristics" formed by people in the same environment, refers to the ideas, thoughts, habits, behaviors, and various activities radiated by a group formed during a certain period of time [2]. It can be said that culture is not a single psychological characteristic, but a shared psychological program among people who have received similar education and social experiences. From this perspective, cultural differences are conflicts that arise when two or more cultures come into contact because the formation and generation of culture are centered around human survival and life experiences. The stimulation and influence of different living environments lead to various views and feelings towards the world beyond oneself, while people in the same environment will have some similar feelings and experiences.

3. Analysis of cultural differences between China and the West

Influenced by various factors such as value concepts, natural environment, and national characteristics, there are cultural differences between China and the West in many aspects. The following is an analysis of the aspects of the privacy concept, food culture, language culture, and thinking mode.

3.1. Privacy concepts

In general, the concept of privacy is mainly caused by cultural differences, as there are certain differences between Chinese and Western cultures and historical development processes. This also leads to different views on privacy between Chinese and Western residents, which is one of the main factors causing communication barriers between them. Privacy belongs to a broad concept, ranging from national information security to personal thoughts and beliefs. From a certain perspective, the concept of personal privacy in China is relatively weak. People do not have a high pursuit of "private" things and value collectivism more. They emphasize selflessness and believe that individual interests must be subordinate to collective and national interests. They advocate mutual assistance, unity, friendship, and mutual encouragement. In Western countries, on the other hand, individual consciousness is stronger, and people are highly sensitive and concerned about privacy. They attach great importance to personal space and do not want others to interfere too much with their privacy. It can be seen that there are completely different attitudes towards privacy between Chinese and Western cultures, and the cultural differences are quite obvious, showing different cultural characteristics. For example, in China, the older generation would ask about one's marital status, age, and occupation out of concern during the first meeting, and the person would honestly answer the questions. However, for residents of Western countries, if they are casually asked about marriage, age, and income, most of them would feel that their privacy is being violated. Therefore, if there is no focused attention when engaging in intercultural translation and interaction between the East and the West, it may have a negative impact and lead to translation failure.

3.2. Food culture

Due to the influence of climate, geographical location, and rapid social development, there are some differences between Chinese and Western food cultures. In China, people pay more attention to

communication, during the meal, residents often toast guests, no matter how rich the meal is prepared, they will habitually say a few words "potluck, poor reception, understanding, etc." Sometimes the host will persuade each other to eat and drink more to ensure that each other can eat well and enough, and no matter what kind of banquet in China, everyone will sit together. Creating a polite and united environment atmosphere, which is also a unique way of hospitality between Chinese people, is an important manifestation of the idea that "peace is the most valuable." In the West, people have different eating habits, and there is no behavior of forcing others or serving dishes. To a certain extent, people are confused about the Chinese hospitality. The main form of the party is a buffet, where people walk around by themselves and choose their favorite food. In terms of drinks, Westerners prefer to drink coffee, while Chinese people have been having tea culture for thousands of years. It can be seen that there are great differences between Chinese and Western food cultures.

3.3. Language culture

Different countries have their own languages due to different historical developments, and the communication patterns formed in such special cultural backgrounds reflect the social customs, thinking patterns, and values of local people. This also makes the difference between Chinese and Western language and culture the most important factor affecting intercultural translation; one is expressed in the level of phonetic pattern, the Chinese language is richer in intonation, including statements, questions, exclamations, rhetorical questions, etc., and it has different tones with certain rules, giving people a sense of intonation. Western languages, on the other hand, emphasize closed and open syllables, and have multi-syllables as well as monosyllables, which causes an obvious difference between Chinese and Western languages. Secondly, the language script is different, as Chinese script originated from pictographs, and the later continued scripts have similar characteristics to shapes, while Western script does not have a three-dimensional structure, but only transforms streamlined symbols into words and letters, lacking pictographic characteristics. At the same time, simple combinations of Chinese characters can create a continuum of meaning which is characteristic of Chinese languages but is difficult to achieve when translated into Western languages.

3.4. Thinking patterns

Generally, as a person grows older and is influenced by his or her own culture and social environment, his or her thought patterns gradually take shape and remain stable. Once the thought pattern is formally formed, people will habitually use it in different scenarios and make various behaviors. Due to the different cultural and social environments in China and the West, different and distinctive thinking patterns are formed. Among them, the Chinese thinking pattern is mainly vague, there is rarely a very strict definition or meaning of various things, clearly pointing out the connotation that China attaches more importance to gnosis intuition. In contrast, Western culture emphasizes precision and reason, defines and argues a thing, and pays more attention to rational and logical thinking, and this is where the difference between Chinese and Western thinking lies [2]. At the same time, there is another difference between Chinese and Western thinking patterns, that is, Chinese traditional thinking is more concerned with organic and dialectical, while Western traditional thinking is concerned with mechanical and concrete, Chinese people think more comprehensively and holistically about issues and consider more content, while the West likes to break down various things and carry out qualitative and quantitative analysis and research. For example, the ancient Chinese gradually grouped all kinds of phenomena in the universe into five elements and eight trigrams, while the West chose

the hypothetical deductive method to divide different phenomena in the universe into different disciplines.

4. Strategies for improving intercultural translation skills based on cultural differences

It is clear from the above analysis that the formation of cultural differences between China and the West is closely related to values and social development environment, etc. [3]. In order to truly decipher such differences and realize intercultural communication and translation, it is necessary for participants to have good awareness, knowledge, and skills to clarify the differences between cultures and start communicating from the cultural common ground.

4.1. Intercultural translation awareness

Consciousness mainly refers to people's understanding of the target culture and whether they are willing to continue in-depth translation, which determines the effect of later translation. In order to improve intercultural translation competence, it is necessary to start from the consciousness. First, it is necessary to enhance intercultural sensitivity competence and awareness of cultural differences. Cultural sensitivity is the motivation to accept and understand different cultures, and its level has a certain impact on intercultural competence, which in turn affects the effectiveness of intercultural translation [4]. For the public, the main factors affecting intercultural awareness are communication confidence and cultural identity. Therefore, in the learning period, we can actively adopt the mode of comparison to recognize and understand the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, activate our interest in the two, generate awareness of cultural differences in our minds, and then strive to overcome barriers to cultural exchange. The second is to establish good global thinking, and constantly enhance global thinking and world awareness, which is a necessary condition to be a global citizen. In recent years, the accelerating pace of global economic development has comprehensively broken the limitations of space, time, human society, and cultural assumptions, requiring people to have new organizational and thinking models. This also increases the value of global thinking and it is becoming more and more important to expand the communicator's ability to avoid the ethnocentric level. We need to strive to accept global thinking on the basis of traditional national language ability and thinking mode and form a more equal, open, welcoming reform and brave-to-learn mentality.

In general, translation barriers and conflicts are inevitable in intercultural translation due to cultural differences. The essential purpose of translation is for both parties to adapt to each other and explore compromise points. Therefore, for different cultures, we must clearly understand the cultural differences, tolerate different opinions, change the mindset in the translation process, eliminate single thinking and follow the principle of equal treatment and mutual respect to carry out translation, be good at starting from the perspective of the other side, put ourselves in the other's shoe, and lay a good foundation for good translation results.

4.2. Personal development of translators

The improvement of intercultural translation skills cannot be accomplished overnight. To truly achieve the purpose of improvement, first of all, it is necessary to continuously strengthen language and cultural practice and acquire good intercultural translation skills through practice. That is, it is necessary to participate in various social practice activities as much as possible and cooperate with foreign-funded enterprises and residents of Western countries. This is also the most effective and direct means to enhance the level of

intercultural translation, other than participating in speech contests, summer camps, etc. with the main purpose of improving oral translation levels, so as to easily and efficiently improve the level of intercultural translation and capture various cultural information under the influence of a strong language and cultural atmosphere. The second is to improve the learning mode. From some aspects, intercultural translation level and skill training are a kind of quality education, which can activate potential in all aspects [5]. In order to truly enhance the education level, we must master the correct learning mode, change the learning mode, and build a systematic knowledge framework. For example, in the process of language context learning, learners can systematically watch or listen to videos and recordings of individuals with different backgrounds, and selectively and pertinently watch Western documentaries and films, so as to get familiar with and understand their language culture and features, and even learn some common expressions. It is imperative to clarify different language application scenarios, use methods and meanings, and gradually overcome translation barriers. In addition, in order to avoid conflicts, it is also necessary to have a thorough grasp of different cultural norms of behavior. In the process of translation, people may inadvertently apply their own national language norms and translation modes, which may lead to cultural or conceptual conflicts. Therefore, to a certain extent, a clear grasp of cultural behavior norms and matters needing attention, continuous enhancement of their own quality, correct cultural awareness, timely adoption of evasive or remedial strategies, and the establishment of a correct and standardized translation awareness can ensure the orderly, smooth, and high-quality implementation of intercultural translation.

4.3. Cultural knowledge framework

Due to the culture and knowledge involved in intercultural translation, a lack of cultural background knowledge will greatly hinder the improvement of English language learning ability. Therefore, in the process of improving intercultural translation skills, it is necessary to focus on building a knowledge framework, and accurately grasp cultural knowledge related to language application, language material knowledge, and compare Chinese and Western cultures. First, we should continuously enhance the proportion of Chinese culture, take traditional excellent national culture as the main foundation, and accurately grasp the specific development context and historical origins of Chinese culture. China has a history of five thousand years of development, with a rich and profound culture and long-standing achievements, not only in terms of Chinese characters, literature, architecture, customs, art, and religion, but also in terms of scientific and technological achievements, academic thinking, and cultural exchanges with foreign countries. It is necessary to have a deep understanding and knowledge of traditional Chinese culture and integrate and communicate with other cultures based on a precise understanding of one's own cultural mechanisms. Secondly, we need to focus on mastering Western classical cultures such as the ancient Roman system, Greek philosophy, and religious culture, and clarify the historical factors and characteristics of Western culture. On the basis of a deep understanding of language and writing, it is important to perceive Western social culture, and clarify the specific situations of Western countries' geography, history, politics, economy, and social environment, continuously enhancing sensitivity to cultural differences and flexible handling of diversity. Thirdly, we should also actively engage in comparisons to deepen understanding and grasp of cultural differences. There are significant differences in core values and concepts between Chinese and Western cultures. By comparing Chinese and Western cultures, clarifying cultural differences and their impact, effectively and comprehensively understanding the overall development, key differences, and characteristics of Chinese and Western cultures, language adaptability can be continuously enhanced, and conflicts caused by personal

values or language differences can be avoided as much as possible.

5. Case studies in intercultural translation

5.1. Chinese classical literature in English

Chinese classical literature, such as the works of Confucius, Laozi, and ancient poets like Li Bai and Du Fu, presents significant challenges for translators. These texts are rich in historical and cultural references, and their language is often highly poetic and metaphorical [6].

For example, translating *The Analects of Confucius* into English requires not only a grasp of Classical Chinese but also an understanding of Confucian philosophy. Key concepts such as " 仁 " (*ren*, often translated as "benevolence" or "humaneness") and " 义 " (*yi*, often translated as "righteousness" or "justice") carry connotations that are deeply rooted in Chinese ethical thought. A translator must decide whether to use direct translations, which may seem abstract to Western readers or to provide interpretive translations that convey the intended meaning in a more accessible way.

5.2. Western literature in Chinese

Conversely, translating Western literature into Chinese also involves complex cultural negotiations. Western literary works often reflect values and themes that may not have direct counterparts in Chinese culture. For instance, the concept of individualism, which is central to many Western novels, might need to be carefully contextualized when translated into Chinese [7].

A case in point is the translation of Shakespeare's works into Chinese. Shakespeare's plays are steeped in the English language's rich idiomatic expressions, puns, and historical references [8]. Translators must balance the need to preserve the poetic qualities of Shakespeare's language with the goal of making the plays comprehensible and enjoyable to a Chinese audience. This often involves creative adaptation, such as finding Chinese idioms that capture the spirit of Shakespeare's wordplay.

6. Conclusion

Intercultural translation is a complex and nuanced process that goes beyond mere linguistic conversion. It involves deep cultural understanding, ethical sensitivity, and creative problem-solving. The cultural differences between China and the West present unique challenges for translators [9]. By acting as cultural mediators, translators play a crucial role in facilitating intercultural translation and preserving the diversity of human expression.

In a world where intercultural interactions are increasingly common, the importance of effective and sensitive translation cannot be overstated. As this paper has shown, successful intercultural translation requires more than just technical expertise; it demands a deep appreciation of the cultural contexts from which languages emerge. By understanding and addressing the cultural differences between China and the West, translators can create translations that are not only accurate but also meaningful and resonant for diverse audiences [10].

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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