The Influences of Chinese and Western Thinking Patterns on Translation

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Abstract: Translation is not only a transformation of two languages, but also of two thinking patterns. It is scientific that the conversion of thinking will determine the accuracy and quality of translation. However, people from different nations will have different thinking patterns due to their own geographical situations, philosophy, economy, etc. Given all this, we make some mistakes in process of translation that will make hearers and readers puzzled, even lead to wrong understandings. Therefore, it is worth studying the influences of Chinese and western thinking patterns on translation. There are four parts in this paper. The first part is the introduction of this paper. It mainly describes the problems needed studying. It also includes conclusions of previous study achievements. The second part is to find out and analyse reasons of the problems of translation caused by the influences of Chinese and western thinking patterns. The third part is to come up with three ways to solve the problems encountered in process of translation based on translation strategies. The fourth part is to make a conclusion about the paper. Therefore, the aim of the paper is that by analysing reasons of the influences of Chinese and western thinking patterns on translation, I will come up with some measures to solve these problems. Meanwhile, I hope that I could contribute to promote the development of translation.

1. Introduction

Translation is getting to become one of the most important roles in all walks of life. When people rush to learn and use translation, they have to encounter so many problems. Translation, like a bridge in communication, is crucial. Therefore, in process of translation, it is necessary to accurately and fitfully express meanings of original texts.

Although there are so many scholars to study the influences of thinking patterns on translation, most of those are only to study it in terms of some theories. For example, Zhang Haitao, professor of Shan Xi University, expressed his ideas in his investigation report of several main factors of influence on translation. He theoretically analyzed the influence of characters of thinking and styles of thinking on translation. Zhou Zhipei, a popular translator in China had ever said translation is not only a process dealing with languages, but also a shifting activity between different modes of thought. Thus, it is clear that the process of translation itself is the shifting process between different thinking patterns. The commonality of human mind is home to the foundation of translation. Owing to different cultural backgrounds, geographical environment and other factors, there are some differences between Chinese and western thinking patterns, of course, which influence the accuracy and qualification of translation.

Given all this, the purpose of the paper is to analyze the influences of Chinese and western thinking patterns on translation by collecting various relative materials to find out some measures to solve these problems.

2. Contrast of Chinese and Western Thinking Patterns

The differences of Chinese and Western thinking patterns originate from different geographical locations, historical traditions and customs. It is recognized that Chinese people pay more attention to the fundamental man-made, while western people lay emphasis on rational thinking. Therefore, it is useful to learn and study the subject. Differences of thinking patterns are main reasons of

differences of languages.

2.1 The Types of Chinese and Western Thinking Patterns

2.1.1 Ethics vs Cognition

Chinese people pay more attention to ethics. Obviously, Confucianism is one of the most influential thinking in our society. Philosophers on behalf of Confucianism get to know the world from the perspective of social politics and ethics, not of the nature. Quite the opposite, western people, living in the marine environment, lay emphasis on study of astronomy and geography. They get used to forming thinking patterns of investigating the natural mystery, and then gain some knowledge they need. For example, here is a sentence, "Xiao Ming and Xiao Dan are cousins. Xiao Ming's mother is Xiao Dan's aunt who is the sister of Xiao Dan's father, while Xiao Dan's mother is Xiao Ming's aunt who is the wife of Xiao Ming's brother." In this sentence, the relationship is very easy to be understood for Chinese, but quite difficult for western people. In western culture, people only use "aunt" to represent this relationship. If want to distinguish particularly, people add name to behind "aunt", like Aunt Sara.

2.1.2 Figurative thinking vs Logical thinking

Chinese people pay more attention to figurative thinking that can be reflected on hieroglyphic characteristic of Chinese characters. One of the most important characteristic of Chinese characters is to use the appearance of an object to express its meaning. However, as for western people, they draw attention to logical thinking. For example, there are some idioms in Chinese, like "as timid as a mouse (chicken-hearted in English)", and "lure the tiger out of the mountains (lure the enemy out of the base in English)".

2.2 The Reasons of Difference of Chinese and Western Thinking Patterns

Chen Duxiu, one of the most famous Chinese thinkers, has ever said that different people living in different environment have different thinking patterns. Therefore, it proves that environment plays an important role in influencing thinking patterns. China, as an inland country, formed enclosed continental geographical environment. Living in this kind of environment, people are relatively conservative. Conversely, as for western people living in open ocean geographical environment, advanced industrial, commercial and seafaring civilization, they are open and adventured-like.

It is reported that there are obvious differences between Chinese and Western philosophy, especially the attitude toward language influencing on thinking patterns. Chinese philosophy pays more attention to humanism. For example, Lao-Tzu, founder of Taoism, denies the ultimate expression of functions of language, but stresses on the importance of morality. However, as for western thinking, signifier is the basic point of western thinking patterns. Western people rely on functions of language. Two main head-streams of western civilization are Greek philosophy (Greek's traditional math), and Hebrew religion (Legal tradition).

Chinese and western thinking patterns also are influenced by different economic systems. The history of small-scale peasant economy influence people thinking patterns. The thinking target is human-self, not the nature. Therefore, the characters of Chinese thinking patterns are self-seeking center of gravity technique, and ethics. However, as for western people, owing to development of coastal manufacture, commerce, and seafaring, people are more willing to study astronomy, geometry, physics, and mathematics which cause that western people get deeply interested in exploiting of mystery of nature. Under the circumstance of industrial revolution, science, and democracy, western people gradually form thinking patterns like theory of fairness, practice, and competition.

3. Translation Strategies Based on Thinking Patterns

The influences of Chinese and western thinking patterns on translation have proved through the analysis and contrast of the differences between Chinese and western thinking patterns. It also turns out that translation is influenced by different thinking habits, thinking styles, thinking center, and thinking emphasis. We, at the same time, come up with some ways to solve these problems above.

3.1 Cultural Translation

The cultural translation is an analysis of the surface and deep structures of culture and language, and the examination of the internal contact of culture and translation as well as the objective laws pertaining to their interaction. Facsimile of culture refers to the basic criterion of translation, which requires that the meaning, form and style of the source language can be precisely expressed in the translation from the language of culture. In the paper, the differences of Chinese and western thinking patterns are caused by different geographical location, traditions and customs, and background of culture. Therefore, it needs to build up the base of learning western thinking pattern where we can learn and study knowledge of background of culture and tradition and customs. First of all, it needs to read original English materials, like fictions, magazines newspapers and optical disks, etc. Secondly, it needs to organize some activities, such as English corners, playing English movies, and English drama competitions to improve English atmosphere. Thirdly, it needs to create more opportunities to communicate with native speakers. In addition, it is sure to highly value on religious influence. For example, "Lick the dust." This phrase cannot be obtrusively translated into Chinese version like "wu ti tou di" in Chinese. This phrase means that : "bei gong qu xi" in Chinese. Thus, it is important to stress on both surface meaning and deep meaning. It may try to use literal translation with annotation to translate some idioms used in Bible. For example, to translate the rich as a Jew. It is known that Jew is a representation of richness because they accumulated wealth by means of usurious loan. And it is better to use literal translation than to use free translation. The advantage of this way is that it can express things vividly and truly.

3.2 Abstract Translation

Abstract thinking is the most advanced thinking pattern. It is also called as abstract logicality or logical thinking. Abstract thinking is a thinking way operated by means of using conception and verbal signs to think. The feature of abstract thinking is to use ways of analysis, synthesis, abstract and conclusion to think to express the nature and rule of things. Abstract thinking can be divided into two parts. One is empirical thinking. The other is theoretical thinking. Empirical thinking refers to think about things according to daily experience and conceptions. However, it is easy to make some mistakes and prejudices by this way because of its limitation of daily experience. Conversely, theoretical thinking is operated by scientific conceptions and theories. This kind of thinking can think over essential features and nature of things. And also, logical thinking can be divided into two parts. One is called formal logic thinking. The other is called dialectic logic thinking. Formal logic thinking means that the thinking is operated by means of cognition of conceptions and theories and then is done according to rules of formal logic thinking. The forms of this thinking are conceptions, judgments, and reasons. And dialectical thinking refers that the thinking is operated by means of cognition of conceptions and theories, and then done according to rules of dialectical thinking. Thus, if we want to perform well in translation, we need to train and improve the ability of abstract thinking to establish correct base. Obviously, abstract thinking is more in English than in Chinese, so we need to be familiar to abstract words in English, and also, we need to manipulate means to make meanings of some English words abstract so that we can freely and accurately transform thinking patterns between Chinese and western thinking patterns. For example, abstract noun is one of the most typical examples. Here is a Chinese sentence made by Chinese people that is "In a few years, he has completely forgotten French." However, in fact, if the sentence above made by western people, it will be like this "In later years French has completely escaped my mind." It is well known that abstract noun is more vivid and terse. We train and improve abstract thinking by these ways. Firstly, we can learn and use scientific conceptions, theories, and systems. Secondly, we need to learn and use well language systems. Thirdly, we can learn abstract mnemonics with understanding mnemonics, which can promote the study of abstract thinking.

3.3 Grammatical Translation

The grammar translation method is coined by some scholars according to the conclusion of practical usage of experience of the grammatical translation method under the influences of

mechanistic linguistics and psychology. Grammatical translation method aims to foster the ability of reading. The procedures of the method are to firstly analyze grammar, and then to translate foreign languages into native languages. It advocates to make a mechanistic contrast between two languages and do word-for-word translation. It turns out that grammatical translation method is to stress on the accuracy of languages. It stresses on careful analysis of rules of grammar, and then advocates to put these conclusions into practice. The abilities of reading and composition are the key points of grammatical translation method. Only in this way can it make a contrast of native languages and target languages so that we can well learn and use foreign languages. Therefore, we must correctly lead foreign language learners to emphasize on some related knowledge about subject and object, and active and passive voice. Moreover, we must overcome the interferences of differences of thinking patterns, and cannot neglect languages and their related culture. In process of translation, people not only pay more attention to native language, but also to various transformations between two kinds of languages, like language structure, semantic system, and related historical culture. For example, people who get used to using active voice to express what they want to say to change or add subject of a sentence, and change voice of a sentence to eligibility of English expressions and habits of thinking patterns according to logical meaning. It is important to pay more attention to train the awareness of subject and object.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I analyze the influences of Chinese thinking patterns and western thinking patterns on translation. I, at the same time, come up with the reasons that cause the difference of thinking patterns between Chinese and western thinking patterns, and the problems encountered in process of translation. The most important part of the paper is to put forward some measures according to translation strategies to solve these problems. For one thing, it is important to well learn and understand Chinese thinking patterns and western thinking patterns, and the relation between translation and thinking patterns. And it is essential to create more opportunities for foreign language learners to feel, learn and understand native thinking patterns of target language so that they positively take part in all kinds of activities related to translation. In the future, translation will continue to play a significant role in daily life. And it is sure that there will be a huge breakthrough in translation, especially in the study of the relation of thinking patterns and translation. I will continue to spare no effort to study this subject and make some new breakthroughs.

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