

Influence of Thought Difference between English and Chinese on the Translation of Political Terms

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摘要：随着中国国力的不断发展，中华民族在世界民族之林中扮演着越来越重要的角色。政治用语作为一种官方用语，在国际交流中有着举足轻重的作用。然而由于不同的文化背景，世界各民族之间的语言也存在很大差异。因此准确有效的翻译政治用语是权威国际交流的保证，是不同民族交流过程中的重要环节。翻译质量的高低直接决定了民族交流的深度和广度。本文基于英汉思维差异，分析 2017 年“两会”政府工作报告中政治用语的翻译，并尝试分析政治用语的翻译策略。

Abstract:

With the continuous improvement of China's national strength, the Chinese nation plays an increasingly important role in the world's national affairs. Political language, as an official term, plays a pivotal role in international communication. However, due to different cultural backgrounds, the languages between the various ethnic groups in the world are very different. So carrying out accurate and effective translation of political terms is the guarantee of international exchanges, and is also a vital part of the national exchanges. The quality of translation directly determines the depth and breadth of national communications. Based on the thought differences between English and Chinese, this paper analyzes the translation of political terms in the report of the "two sessions" in 2017 and tries to analyze the translation strategies of political terms.

Key Words: Thinking Difference; Translation; Political Language; Government WorkReport; Political Vocabulary with Chinese Characteristics

Introduction

Language is a special social phenomenon, which is the inevitable outcome of human development. As one of the important signs of human development, the language is filled with rich content and is greatly influenced by the thought difference which determines the expression ways in communication with foreign countries. Different countries have different living environments, historical evolution, local conditions and customs, so the way of their thinking are also different, and this difference is inevitably reflected in language.

Thus, language and thinking should be closely linked. On one hand, thought can be expressed by language, without language, it's difficult to show what the language is. On the contrary, language can not be enriched with thought. What's more, the development of the thought promotes the development of language, which in turn also promotes the development of thought, and the two interact with each other.

With the strengthening of China's national strength, the Chinese government is increasingly daring to express its attitude and position in international affairs. Therefore, the international translation of Chinese political language is attracting more and more attention. While, at present, the study of Chinese political language translation is still in its infancy. In order to facilitate Westerners to better understand China's policy and diplomatic policy, we need to study the possible impact of differences in thinking on political terms translation.

Translation is not only a kind of language activity, but also a thinking activity. The common law of thought is the basis for translation, so the in-depth and systematic discussion of the thought difference can help us better understand the different language expressions, which has inspired and guided the practice of translation.

The translation of political language is the most authoritative document, which not only requires high quality of its translation, but also is expected to be well understood by the foreigners. By comparing the thought difference between different languages, a good translation of the political language can be achieved. Meanwhile, it's a new try to study the translation of the political language from the perspective of the thought difference, as well as a practice to widen the application of thought difference to the translation of political language. Last but not the least, the combination of the theory and practice helps to improve the translation quality of the political text so as to get achievements in the communication with foreign countries.

Literature Review

2.1 Previous Study on Thought Difference

The Chinese people place more emphasis on intuitive feelings and personal experience while understanding the world. Thus they look at things making sensibility and rationality, intuition and thought, experience and conscience and other aspects coordinated and balanced with development. This kind of intuitive image of thought is based on experience by using a series of analogy, metaphor and symbolism image styles to clarify specific concepts, emotions and intentions. Westerners pay more

attention to abstract thinking, starting from the ancient Greek Aristotle, and always have focused on philosophical speculation. Westerners are accustomed to cognizant the world and dealing with the problems with an analytic perception, focusing on objective verification and being full of rational spirits. They prefer reasoning and deduction and study the essence of things through appearance to form highly developed thinking and a whole set of logical reasoning methods. (Luo Yanfeng, 2008) Chinese is highly on synthesizing-type thinking, English is highly on analysis-type thinking. In the traditional thinking, Chinese pay more attention to "the doctrine of the mean", so the Chinese in the description of people and things often pursue the objective scene and subjective emotional. The traditional philosophical thinking of westerns emphasizes the "Nature and Man in One" with subject and object opposition, and lays stress on rational thinking. This kind of thinking reflected in the language is that English is more realistic and the objective scene can be reproduced through concrete images. Hence the word and sentence are simple, short and neat. (Gu Xiumei,2014) Chinese culture adhere to the key value of people-oriented. Confucianism argue that: "million things are prepared for me, "Guoxue master has brilliantly pointed out that Chinese culture takes humanities as the center, is based on life and is the most humanistic. Chinese culture is essentially a culture of people-oriented. The way of thought is reflected in the language, that is Chinese often use personal expression, from the self-departure describing the objective things and using lots of active voices, which reflects its subjective consciousness. While the Western philosophy indicate that "man-made", stressing man and nature, the opposition of the subject and the object. Therefore, the way of thought is manifested in language, that is English has the tendency to use impersonal expression, pay attention to the influence of things on the people and use many passive voices, reflecting the object consciousness (Shan Wenbo,2010).

Each nation has its own unique political, economic vocabulary and expression. These political language is looked as an important part of each nation, making a contribution to each country's foreign communication. So the translation of the political language must obey some special methods. First, we can use literal translation method. Because of its preservation of the primitive cultural characteristics and the way of thought of the Chinese, Chinese readers can easily understand its meaning. For foreign readers, because of its accordance with English semantic and syntactic structure, it will not be difficult to understand. At the same time, these straight words accurately express the principles of our country in different periods, embodying the distinctive characteristics of Chinese English. (Na Jinfeng,2010) Second, free translation is another method by adding words or reducing words, when the content of the source vocabulary and the expression of target language is contradictory.(Yin Yahui,2013) In the end, the translation of the political language should combine with localization translation and foreignization translation, hence the translator needs to understand and make good use of the cultures of China and western, and balance the advantages and disadvantages in the translation of localization and foreignization. (Chen Lidan,2014)

2.2 Previous Study on Linguistic Characteristics

English, as an international language, is applied to all areas. Therefore, we have to use English to

express our Chinese current politics. Under these circumstances, we must create “China English” while mastering English habits.

There are a lot of linguistic characteristics in the translation of political language. The first is generality and conciseness. This is determined by the Chinese characteristics. Thus, abbreviations are often used in the political language. The next is “keeping up with the times”. New words have occurred in the development of the age. (Gao Jing,2012) The last is “easy to understand”. As the internet technology advanced, network words have been emerging on after another. Many words are adopted by government. (Wang Xue; Cai Lihua,2013)

Theoretical Framework

3.1 Overview

From a philosophical point of view, thought is an indirect reflection of the human brain's objective reality. On account of different living environment and historical, cultural tradition between English and Chinese nations, distinctly different thoughts are formed. Specifically speaking, people in different nations turn the reflection of the reality into their own habits and experience, then developed into their own thoughts by means of language. And these thoughts are divided into different ways of thought, characteristics of thought and styles of thought. This is thought difference, showing that one nation has formed a kind of mental disposition for millions of years. Consequently, the thought difference is inevitable and controlled by the nature of one nation.

3.2 Basic Notions

Thought is the basis of language conversion, which determines the specific conversion of language to be limited by thought.

The thought difference between English and Chinese is bound to affect conversion of these two language. Therefore, we must be aware of the thought difference among different nationalities. Now, let us analyze the influence of thought difference on the translation of political terms.

1. Thinking habits are different in different languages, resulting in difficulty to understand the meaning of words and affecting the accuracy of the translation. The British pay attention to abstract thinking and abstract expressions in English use are quite common, which makes our translation activities difficult to be finished. This is all on account of Chinese lacking the means of abstract expression in English, and its words have no morphological changes. Therefore, a large number of abstract nouns in English are often difficult to be translated into Chinese accordingly. And, many of the specific words in Chinese are also difficult to be embodied in English. If we deal with translation indiscriminately and mechanically, the quality of the translation will be not qualified.

2. Different thinking style has different focus on the sentence, which also affects the translation quality. Both Chinese and English have their own thinking style, each of which may put emphasis on different language points. So in translation, an appropriate adjustment between different languages should be made so as to get accurate and effective translation.

3. Different thinking center results in voice misuse and misinterpretation. The subjective way of thinking of Chinese only emphasizes the subjective feelings, pushes rational, functional and communication purposes, and ignores the objective reality which is carried out in a logical form, in which the change of speech will not be reflected. If a sentence or phrase lacks subject and object consciousness, it is easy to misinterpret.

4. Thinking focus is different, resulting in different forms of expression, and thus affect the fluency and smooth of translation. Because the British pay attention to formal logic, of which the sentence structure obeys subject-subordinate relations. While Chinese do not pay much attention to the formal logic, so the sentence structure is loose. In translation, if we ignore the the sentence characteristics caused by the thought difference, then our translation is likely to make the English translation fragmented.

The Influence of Thought Difference between Chinese and English to the Translation of Political Language

4.1 The Thought Difference on Translation of Political Language

The languages of different countries are different in voice, vocabulary, grammar and so on, so the way of thinking is also different. But the thinking activities of the people in understanding of the nature of objective things are the same. (贾荣武, 2003,23(2):41) The translation includes the process of the translator's understanding of the original text and the reproduction of the target information. The precise translation comes from the correct understanding of the original text. (马兰芳, 2004,19(4): 86) Thought difference will certainly affect the conversion of different languages. Therefore, in the translation process, the translators must understand the thought difference between different languages.

The influence of the thought difference on the translation can be illustrated from the following aspects:

(1) Different ways of thinking, different understanding of the language terms, which are easy to affect the accuracy of the translation text. For example: “要坚持“不打棍子、不扣帽子、不抓辫子”。 If we do not understand this term, it is easy to make mistakes. We should translate it into “It is important to adhere to the principles of not criticizing others without good reasons, not labeling them, and not preying on their weakness.”

(2) Different ways of thinking, different expression and use of the language habits, which affect the quality of the translation. For example: “大力弘扬中国精神，推动社会主义文化繁荣发展” Because of different expression, the order of sentence is often not the same. In Chinese, the verb is usually in the front, the subject is usually in the back. If we ignore this, it is difficult to translate high-quality text. So we should translate it into “We put great energy into fostering the Chinese spirit and promoted the flourishing and development of socialist culture”.

(3) Different ways of thinking, different sentence structures, which play an important role in translation. For example: “切实增强政治意识、大局意识、核心意识、看齐意识” If we translate it word by word, it will cause this sentence mechanically. So we should translate it into “The Standing Committee increased its consciousness of the need to maintain political integrity, think in big-picture terms, uphold the leadership core, and keep in alignment”.

(4) Different ways of thinking, different emphasis of the sentence, which determines the voice(语态) of the sentence in translation. For example: “政协民主监督内容丰富, 必须突出重点、有的放矢” The emphasis of this sentence is not the subject but the content of the back, thus we should use passive voice. So we should translate it into “Given the wide breadth covered by CPPCC democratic oversight, we must have clear priorities and targets”.

4.2 Strategies for the Translation of Political language

In this part, we proceed from actual conditions to introduction of the influences of English and Chinese thinking differences on the translation of political terms. *2017 Report on the Work of Government* is the example to explain the ideas of chapter two.

Source text 1: “一带一路”倡议

Target text 1: The Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st century Maritime Silk Road Initiative;
The Belt and Road Initiative.

Source text 2: 两学一做

Target text 2: Studies on the theoretical and practical issues of party building; party building studies.

Source text 3: 着力抓好“三去一降一补”

Target text 3: We focused on five priority tasks—cutting overcapacity, reducing excess inventory, decelerating, lowering costs, and strengthening areas of weakness.

Source text 4: 四风

Target text 4: Formalism, bureaucrat-ism, hedonism, and extravagance.

Here, we can see that“一带一路”,“两学一做”,“三去一降一补”and “四风”in the source text, which are every familiar to Chinese. But, due to lack of background of the source text, it's difficult for the target readers to understand these special terms with Chinese characteristics, especially the numeral abbreviation which has rich intention.

What's more, the term“一带一路”in the source text 1, is a fixed expression in Chinese political language which is proposed by President Xi Jinping and translated into two different versions. And it's obvious that the first version is more detailed than the second one, fro the reason that this item was newly created in 2013, which is not unfamiliar to statesmen. And there is still something wrong with the translation of “倡议” in source text 1. We apply free translation to deliver the meaning of it and there are many words in the political language such as “strategy”, “project”, “propose” and so on. Target text stressed on its initiative.

This is because that the Chinese government always insists that “一带一路” is not a diplomatic policy which only serves to China or the chip of strategic issue, but a public product promoted by China, which benefits all the countries along the routine and the international community.

The analysis of “两学一做” and “三去一降一补” is the same as source text 1.

Just as we know, the item “四风” refers to four different fields, When President Xi Jinping mentions the bad fashion in officialdom, we always want to conclude them as one whole to seek conciseness, but English do not consider them as same as we, they pursue accuracy more, so, the English version was unambiguous and definite.

Source text 5:我们一定要让企业和群众更多感受到“放管服”改革成效, 着力打通“最后一公里”, 坚决除烦苛之弊、施公平之策、开便利之门。

Target text 5: To see that businesses and the public benefit more from our reforms to streamline administration, delegate powers, and improve regulation and services, we must cut red tape, level the playing field, provide greater convenience, and remove that last crucial hurdle.

Here, we first pay attention to “放管服”, it is a abbreviations, so, in English version, it is splited in detail. “最后一公里” is a symbolic word to mean last challenge, so, it is translated to “last crucial hurdle”.

Conclusion

5.1 Major Findings

All in all, thought difference between English and Chinese has a significant impact on both the sentence structure and expression of the two languages as well as on the English-Chinese bilingual translation activities. Only by having a deep understanding of the complex interaction of language, thought and translation, and integrating with Chinese realities, can we employ correct translation strategy to the political terms translation.

Moreover, the translation of political language differentiates from the general translation activity. For a translator of political language, if he wants to do this work better, firstly he ought to acquire and enrich his own knowledge, including some basic cultural, historical, political knowledge and so on. Then, he must clear out and respect the difference between English and Chinese. Most importantly, a translator also should learn to exchange this thought difference and apply it into the practice of the political language translation. Of course, it is necessary for a translator to keep up with the times.

5.2 Suggestions for Further Studies

The article is based on the historical background that China's national strength and international status are significantly increased, with a focus on the latest Political Consultative Conference, analyzing and discussing some features of differences between Chinese and English thinking and the influence on political terms translation. The author hopes that this paper will work for Chinese political terms translation.

However, there are some problems in the translation of political terms, which can not be ignored by every translator, such as improper words or collocation and the phenomenon of repetition. In order to avoid these problems, every translator should try his own best to improve professional skills and should always keep an active attitude toward the translation of political language. A translator must, at any time, keep the thought difference in mind, and manage to get over this obstacle to find out new ways to do this work better.

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