

Research on College English Translation Teaching from the Perspective of Cultural Confidence Taking CET-4 and CET-6 Translation as Example

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ABSTRACT

Cultural confidence means that a country, a nation or individual not only has a strong confidence in its own cultural traditions, cultural values and cultural advantages, but also can tolerate and respect other cultures. General Secretary Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasized the importance of cultural confidence on many occasions. In college English teaching, especially in translation teaching, insufficient attention is paid to the Chinese traditional culture and many college students lack of cultural confidence. They are often at a loss when translating the culture-related words with Chinese characteristics especially in CET-4/6 translation test. This paper is aimed at exploring how to enhance cultural confidence in college English translation teaching, promote Chinese culture and tell Chinese stories well to the world and meanwhile improve students' translation ability.

Keywords: Cultural confidence, Chinese culture, College English translation teaching, Translation strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Culture is the soul of both a country and a nation. A country will thrive only when its culture thrives, and a nation will be strong only when its culture is strong. Increasing confidence in our own culture is critical to the prospects of our country, to our cultural security, and to the independence of our national character. College English classroom teaching is to cultivate college students' cultural confidence and spread Chinese culture, but in college English teaching, especially in translation teaching, insufficient attention is paid to the Chinese traditional culture and many college students lack of cultural confidence, just as Zhang Jianchang (2018) said, "Many college students lack cultural confidence, which is mainly manifested in the following aspects: some students worship western culture, and know little about the Chinese traditional culture. They do not have a solid foundation of culture and their ideals and beliefs are wavering, and some even fall into the crisis of identifying mainstream values." Many of college students are often at a loss when dealing with the

translation of cultural load words with Chinese characteristics while taking the CET-4/6 test. This paper is aimed at exploring how to enhance cultural confidence in college English translation teaching, how to tell Chinese stories well in English, disseminate Chinese culture, and improve students' comprehensive ability of applying English.

2. CONFIDENCE IN CULTURE

According to Eugene A. Nida (2006), culture is "the totality of beliefs and practices of a society". Confidence in culture means that a country, a nation or an individual has a strong confidence in their own cultural traditions, cultural values and cultural advantages, and meanwhile can tolerate and respect other cultures. Qin Panhong (2021) holds that the so-called cultural self-confidence refers to the overall recognition and full affirmation of the cultural value of a certain cultural subject, which is the pride and firm belief in the vitality of their own culture. General Secretary Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasized the importance of cultural confidence on many occasions. On July 1, 2016, General Secretary Xi made it clear at the

conference celebrating the 95th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC) that Chinese Communists must adhere to the Four-sphere Confidence in Chinese socialism, that is, confidence in culture along with confidence in our path, theory and system in order to stay true to the original aspiration and keep moving forward. He also stressed that cultural confidence is a more basic, broader and deeper confidence. On October 14, 2017, cultural confidence was written into the Constitution of the Communist Party of China. In the report to the 19th National Congress on October 18, 2017, Xi pointed out, "Without a high degree of cultural confidence, without the prosperity of culture, there will be no great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." In the report of the Party's 20th National Congress on Oct.16, 2022, Xi advocated promoting cultural confidence and self-improvement and creating new glory for socialist culture". He stressed that it is a must to adhere to the path of socialist cultural development with Chinese characteristics, enhance cultural self-confidence, build a strong socialist culture and enhance the spiritual strength for realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation to build a modern socialist country in an all-round way. All of these demonstrate that confidence in culture is of vital importance to everyone, especially to colleges students nowadays in modern society due to the fact that they are the future of our country and shoulder the responsibility of building our country into a strong and prosperous one in all aspects.

3. REQUIREMENTS ON COLLEGE STUDENTS' CULTURAL CONFIDENCE AND TRANSLATION ABILITY

One of the core tasks of College English teaching is to disseminate excellent traditional Chinese culture, just as General President Xi pointed out in the the Report of the Twentieth Congress that it is necessary to implant Chinese culture in various aspects and dimensions in the process of talent training, enhance the recognition of excellent traditional Chinese culture, and cultivate cultural confidence. The College English Teaching Guidelines (the Guidelines) issued by the Ministry of Education in February 2017 states that the teaching goal of college English is to cultivate students' English application ability, enhance intercultural communication awareness and communication ability, and at the same time develop students' independent learning ability and improve comprehensive cultural literacy.

According to the Guidelines, college students are required to be able to use proper translation skills and translate more formal argumentative or different topics of oral or written materials with the help of dictionary, which introduce China and other countries' national conditions and cultures, and make sure that the translation content is accurate and smooth, with no mistranslation, omitting translation and few language expression errors. Accordingly, College English Test (CET-4/6) is also aimed at testing college students' integrated English ability, including translation ability. And the requirement for learners' translation ability in the College English Test Outline (2016) is that learners can translate into English a Chinese paragraph with low-or-medium language difficulty, which involves Chinese culture, history and social development, etc. Paragraph translation in CET-4 and CET-6 involves all aspects of Chinese culture, including both Chinese traditional culture, such as Chinese food, Chinese tea art, Chinese art, Chinese traditional architecture, Chinese festivals, Chinese dynasties, etc., and also hot topics of Chinese society, such as urbanization, education, economic development, information technology development, etc. While taking the translation test, learners are required to use basic translation strategies or skills properly. And the score of this part is 15%. According to the scoring criteria, an excellent translation with more than 12 points needs to accurately express the semantics of the original text, with appropriate words, smooth writing, and basically no language errors; and a poor translation with less than 6 points is mainly reflected in fragmented translation, less accurate words, and considerable language errors.

4. CURRENT SITUATION AND EXISTING PROBLEMS OF COLLEGE ENGLISH TRANSLATION TEACHING

College English course is part of humanistic education in higher education. In terms of humanity, one of the important tasks of college English courses is to carry out cross-cultural education. Language is the carrier of culture, and is also a part of culture. Contemporary college students need to understand foreign societies and cultures, enhance the understanding of different cultures and the consciousness of similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures and cultivate cross-cultural communication ability, just as Liu lisha and Ma Huijuan (2019) said, "Language is the carrier of cultural communication and the ultimate

goal of our language learning should be cultural learning and serve the communication between countries.”

4.1 *Insufficient Teaching Materials Related to Chinese Culture in Textbooks*

However, there are relatively few teaching materials concerning Chinese culture for college students. Take New Horizon College English (Reading and Writing) (Third Edition) for example, there are altogether 32 units in four books, with 8 units in each book. Only in the part of Language Focus of Section A of each unit can people find the exercise of paragraph translation (from Chinese into English) concerning Chinese culture, which is in correspondence with the test of paragraph translation in CET 4/6. Xiao Yanjun (2019) holds that college English courses lack of Chinese culture contents and the types and quantities of mainstream textbooks related to Chinese cultural knowledge are relatively scarce compared with rich British and American cultural textbooks. Moreover, teachers won't spend much time supplementing more Chinese culture in class due to limited teaching time and most teachers are inclined to emphasize Western culture and undervalue Chinese (local) culture; therefore college students will not be exposed to enough Chinese culture and have much difficulty in translating Chinese culture into English, especially culture-related words and expressions with Chinese characteristics.

4.2 *Students' Lack of Cultural Confidence and Insufficient Knowledge of Chinese Culture*

It is quite common that contemporary college students lack of cultural confidence, accompanied by low cultural translation ability and some even with “Chinese culture aphasia” (Xiao Yanjun, 2019). Research shows that college students did poorly in the translation of culture-related words and expressions in CET-4 and CET-6. After each test, many candidates would complain on the social media that the translating of certain words concerning Chinese culture is too difficult. Gao Jie (2018) believes that translating Chinese paragraphs and culture-related contents has caused great translation barriers. Liu Xiling (2019) also holds that since the reform of CET-4 and CET-6, many students say that the biggest obstacle in translation is reflected in two aspects: one is that they are poor in expressing Chinese culture in English, and their

relevant vocabulary is small; the other is due to the lack of corresponding translation strategies and methods and therefore their translation version is often fragmented and inappropriate.

5. THE WAY TO ENHANCE CULTURAL CONFIDENCE AND IMPROVE STUDENTS' TRANSLATION ABILITY

According to the analysis above, it is of great importance and necessity to enhance college students' confidence in Chinese culture, analyze and compare the differences between Chinese and English, and do more translation practice in their daily life to improve their translation ability and meanwhile disseminate Chinese culture and tell well Chinese stories to the world.

5.1 *Providing Sufficient Reading Materials About Chinese Culture*

First of all, it is urgent to provide sufficient reading materials about Chinese culture in college English teaching. Teachers may recommend students to read classical literary masterpieces, ancient folk stories, Chinese traditional festivals and relevant customs, etc., which can fully embody the value of Chinese culture and people's way of thinking, behavior, etc. In addition, general readings on Chinese history, geography, historical figures, cultural landscapes, climate conditions, and so on should also be included in the reading category. These reading materials are conducive for students to form a comprehensive understanding of the current Chinese culture, and enhance their cultural confidence and cultural identity. Reading bilingual newspapers, periodicals, etc. is also a good way to learn about Chinese culture and current affairs, and also learn about idiomatic expressions of some hot words. For example, China Daily is one of the most authoritative English media in China, and the contents in Columns of Culture, Lifestyle, Travel, etc. on its website contain large quantities of hot topics which are often utilized to test students' translation ability in CET4 and CET-6, for example, participators are expected to do the translation of “self-driving tour” in March 2023 (CET4), the translation of “Chinese 24 Solar Terms” in December 2022 (CET4), the translation of “Tourist resort” in June 2021 (CET6), and the translation of “food culture” in 2020 (CET4). Teachers can also make use of Weibo, Wechat and other network tools guiding students to understand better the bilingual language and

cultural knowledge. For example, bilingual news on China Daily's Wechat official account is beneficial for English learners, providing a lot of hot topics in Chinese society and Chinese culture. These materials can help students accumulate a lot of linguistic and cultural knowledge through daily reading and meanwhile cultivate translation consciousness and ability and spread Chinese excellent traditional culture to the world, so that more countries and people around the world can perceive the charm of Chinese traditional culture.

5.2 Systematically Learning About the Translation of Chinese Cultural Elements

It is necessary to first increase systematic learning contents of the translation of Chinese cultural elements and add to teaching contents English articles reflecting excellent Chinese culture. Teachers can guide students to pay more attention to Chinese cultural sensitive points, hot words of current affairs and so on. They can utilize newspapers, magazines, network resources and other platforms to learn and accumulate corpus, compare and explore Chinese and Western cultures, and export Chinese and Western culture in both directions. In daily translation practice, Chinese and Western cultures should also be combined to cultivate students' English expression ability of excellent Chinese culture and increase their daily accumulation of Chinese cultural terms. Common Chinese excellent traditional culture translation in CET-4 and CET-6 involves the translation of cultural proper nouns. For example, Chinese historical dynasties, such as Han Dynasty, Tang Dynasty, Song Dynasty and Ming Dynasty, Chinese traditional festivals like Spring Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, Lantern Festival, etc. once appeared on previous test papers; so have some cultural proper nouns with Chinese characteristics like "lion dance", "paper cutting", "lantern riddles", "Chinese knot", "Chinese kung fu", and Chinese four classical literary masterpieces: *A Dream of Red Mansions*, *The Water Margin*, *Journey to the West* and *the Romance of The Three Kingdoms*. These translation contents contain rich Chinese traditional culture, constantly encouraging students to learn excellent traditional Chinese culture and explore appropriate ways to transfer between language and culture and meanwhile continuously optimize their language "output" ability. In addition, the translation test in CET-4 and CET-6 also involves Chinese social and economic development, such as "educational equity", "online shopping economy",

"Silk Road", China's famous Bridges, rivers, infrastructure projects, tourist destinations, family education, urban construction and development, Chinese culture export, etc. Under the guidance of CET-4 and CET-6 translation tests, college students are encouraged to pay more attention to Chinese history, culture, economy and social development, understand the great achievements of China's socialist construction and the great process of national rejuvenation, and therefore enhance their cultural confidence and national pride.

5.3 Understanding Differences Between Chinese and English and Enhancing Language Sensitivity and Insight

Understanding the differences between Chinese and English and with target language readers as the audience, college students can avoid blunt translation. In terms of sentence expression, "parataxis" is emphasized in Chinese, and the meaning of the sentence is often conveyed through the context and the order of words, and its logical relationship is implied rather than explicitly stated, while in English "hypotaxis" is emphasized. There are more explicit connectives and grammatical markers to show the logical relationship between different elements and conjunctions, like "and", "but", "because", "while" etc., which are frequently used. For example, the Chinese sentence "他努力学习, 成绩很好。" can be translated into English like this, "He works hard and therefore gets good grades." To conform to English hypotaxis, the coordinating conjunction "and" and adverb "therefore" are added to make the logical relationship clear. One more example, in the translation of "Differences in Food Culture" in CET4 (December 2020), the Chinese sentence "北方人主要吃面食, 南方人大多吃米饭" can be translated into "Wheaten food is a staple in the diet for those living in the north, while for those who live in the south, rice is." By comparison, students will find that the Chinese version is a compound sentence and there is no conjunction in the sentence, but when translated into English, the juxtaposed conjunction "while" is added to make the sentence logical. Moreover, more differences between Chinese and English can be found in a large number of articles and materials, such as "the English language focuses on structure, while the Chinese language focuses on semantics", "the English language has many subordinate clauses, while the Chinese language has many sub-clauses", and "English is more abstract, while Chinese is more concrete". With these differences in mind,

students can deal with translation much more carefully.

5.4 Using Basic Translation Strategies or Skills Flexibly and Improving Translation Ability

Because of these differences between the Chinese and English languages, when translating Chinese into English, college students should constantly compare the words and syntactic structure of their own translation and the reference translation, master some basic sentence patterns and use some basic translation skills or strategies flexibly, such as the addition or subtraction of words, the conversion of parts of speech or word order or voice, etc. For example, in the translation of “Zhang Qian’s Expedition” on CET6 in March 2023, “他不畏艰险，克服重重困难，两次出使西域，开通了中国同西亚和欧洲的通商关系，将中国的丝和丝织品运往西亚和欧洲，开拓了历史上著名的丝绸之路。” The Chinese long sentences are composed of many sub-clauses and students can understand the logical relationship between the sub-clauses even if no relative words are used to indicate their logical relationship. But in English, it is necessary to not only divide long sentences into short sentences, but also add relative pronouns, relative adverbs and other connectives, and make corresponding adjustments in sentence patterns, word order and word classes to make the sentences logical and meaningful. The Chinese long sentences can be translated into English like this, “He made two diplomatic missions to the Western Regions despite all the dangers and difficulties, opened up commercial relations between China and West Asia and Europe, and transported Chinese silk and silk goods to West Asia and Europe, thus opening up the famous Silk Road in history.” In this translation, the predictive verbs “不畏艰险，克服重重困难” are converted into prepositional phrase “despite all the dangers and difficulties”, the coordinating conjunction “and” and adverb “thus” are added and the verbal phrase “开拓了” is translated into the present participle phrase “opening up” to make the sentences logical and meaningful. Similarly, in the translation of “四合院(courtyard house)” on CET-4 in June 2024, “四合院在中国有多种类型，其中以北京的四合院最为典型。” can be translated into “There are various types of courtyard houses across China, among which those in Beijing are the most typical.” In this translation, the subject of the Chinese sentence is converted into the object of the preposition “of”, and the structure “preposition +

relative pronoun”(among which)is used to make the English sentence logical and meaningful and it also conforms to English hypotaxis, while there is no such structure in the Chinese sentence. In the translation of “洞庭湖” in CET-6 (2017.12), “洞庭湖作为龙舟赛的发源地，在中国文化中享有盛名。据说龙舟赛始于洞庭湖东岸，为的是搜寻楚国爱国诗人屈原的遗体。” can be translated into English like this, “Dongting Lake is famous in Chinese culture as the birthplace of dragon boat racing, which is said to have begun on the eastern shores of Dongting Lake as a search for the body of Qu Yuan, the Chu poet (340-278 BC). In this translation, “洞庭湖” is translated into Dongting Lake, using the method of transliteration (Dongting) with literal translation (Lake), which is commonly used in translating a place with Chinese characteristics and easily recognized for international communication. “楚国爱国诗人屈原” is translated into “Qu Yuan, the Chu poet (340-278 BC)”, using the method of addition and adding the historical period in which Qu Yuan lived so that the targeted readers know better about Qu Yuan, an ancient Chinese patriotic poet. The whole English sentence keeps the original meaning but adjusts the order of the original sentence, making it logical and meaningful, and also keeps the cultural characteristics of the original sentence.

From the analysis above, it can be seen that flexible use of some translation strategies or methods can make the translation versions more idiomatic, logical and meaningful. Therefore, in translation teaching and research, teachers should encourage students to use some basic translation strategies or methods flexibly, analyze and compare the differences between Chinese and English, take the target language readers as the audience, express Chinese culture in more fluent and authentic English according to English syntactic characteristics and improve their ability of translation.

6. CONCLUSION

In the context of developing socialist culture with Chinese characteristics and enhancing cultural soft power, the promotion of cultural confidence is particularly important, just as President Xi once stressed, “we need to tell the true story of our country in the right way, disseminate the glorious history and excellent culture of the Chinese nation and people, present a credible, lovely and respectable image of China and promote Chinese culture to the world.” Under the guidance of cultural confidence, education experts should

highlight the importance of Chinese cultural translation. At present, college English translation teaching pay more attention to the import of Western culture and less attention to excellent traditional Chinese culture, resulting in a widespread lack of cultural confidence. Therefore, in the process of daily teaching and learning, teachers should pay equal attention to the introduction of Chinese culture and Western culture in the selection of teaching contents. Teachers should not only introduce Western culture, but focus on the cultivation of students' Chinese cultural confidence. Furthermore, understanding the differences between English and Chinese is also an important part of improving cross-cultural communication skills, spreading Chinese culture and enhancing language sensitivity and insight. In order to better convey the rich meanings of Chinese culture, students must be able to use some basic translation strategies or skills flexibly in the translation process. In a word, College English translation teaching is an important part of cultivating cross-cultural communication ability and enhancing cultural confidence and promoting Chinese culture to the world. It should assume the important responsibility of promoting cultural exchanges, cultivating students' translation ability of Chinese culture and enhancing cultural confidence, so as to disseminate the excellent traditional culture of China and tell Chinese stories well to the world.

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