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A Study of Translation Strategies for Translations of Classic British and American Novels from a Cross-Cultural Perspective

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Abstract: In the context of cross-cultural communication, the transmission effect of implicit cultural elements is a core indicator determining the translation quality of classic British and American novels. This paper first clarifies the core connotation of translating classic British and American novels from a cross-cultural perspective, sorts out the characteristics of three types of implicit cultural elements, and establishes multiple evaluation criteria suitable for cultural communication goals. Second, based on a comparison of existing translations, it analyzes the specific manifestations and generative logic of translation deviations from three dimensions: linguistic expression, image transmission, and value transmission. Finally, it proposes targeted optimization strategies in three stages: pre-translation preparation, mid-translation transference, and post-translation verification. The relevant content can provide a reference for translation practice, help translations balance the restoration of the original's core and the cognitive adaptation of target readers, and realize the effective transmission of literary value in a cross-cultural context.

Keywords: Translation of classic British and American novels; Cross-cultural communication; Implicit cultural elements; Optimization of translation deviations

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1. Introduction

Classic British and American novels are important carriers for the transmission of heterogeneous cultures, and their translation quality directly determines the actual effect of cross-cultural literary communication. Traditional translation of British and American novels mostly takes linguistic equivalence as the core criterion and pays insufficient attention to the transmission of implicit cultural elements embedded in the text, such as folk customs, value orientations, and religious metaphors. This easily causes semantic deviations in translations and hinders value resonance among audiences in different cultural contexts. Exploring optimization paths for translating classic British and American novels from a cross-cultural perspective has

important practical value for restoring the original's semantic core and promoting the efficient dissemination of foreign cultures. In existing translation practice, three types of deviations—cultural misalignment, cultural loss, and cultural misreading—are widespread, but their generative logic has not yet formed a systematic analytical framework, and corresponding optimization strategies also lack implementable operational paths. On this basis, this study first clarifies the core connotation and evaluation criteria of translating classic British and American novels from a cross-cultural perspective, conducts an empirical analysis of the deviation manifestations in existing translations, and finally proposes operable full-process optimization strategies.

2. The core connotation of translating classic British and American novels from a cross-cultural perspective

2.1. Categories of implicit cultural elements in classic British and American novels

Based on the realistic context of cross-cultural communication, behind the textual meaning of classic British and American novels is embedded a large number of implicit cultural contents that are not directly stated. The transmission effect of such content directly determines the completeness of translation. Implicit elements of folk customs are codes of life and conduct formed over a long period in a specific region. They are mostly hidden in descriptions of daily dialogue and behavioral details and are not separately explained with corresponding background. If target-language readers lack prior knowledge of the corresponding culture, they can easily ignore the special meanings carried beneath the surface text. Further observation reveals that implicit elements of value orientation are consensus standards of right and wrong among a specific social group. They are mostly embedded in character choices and plot developments and do not directly express the creator's evaluative tendency. If translation conveys only the literal plot content, it will strip away the original work's implied expression of group stance [1]. From the deep logic of textual meaning, implicit cultural elements of religious metaphor are rooted in the long religious cultural tradition of Europe and America. They are mostly attached to the design of specific images and plot metaphors and are not separately marked with corresponding associations. If translation only performs surface-level verbal conversion, it will dissolve the deep meaning space established by the original work.

2.2. Core evaluation criteria for translation from a cross-cultural perspective

Based on the bidirectional characteristics of cross-cultural communication, the evaluation of translations of classic British and American novels needs to break away from the single dimension of traditional linguistic equivalence and establish multiple judgment standards matching the goals of cultural communication. The evaluation of information transmission accuracy focuses on examining the translation's complete transmission effect on the original's explicit narrative content and implicit cultural meanings, judging the degree of restoration of implicit cultural elements such as folk customs, value orientations, and religious metaphors embedded in the original, and avoiding problems of semantic loss in translation [2]. In light of the cultural communication attribute of translation, the evaluation of cultural adaptation compatibility focuses on judging whether the translation's transformation of different cultural connotations conforms to the expressive logic of the target culture, so that target-language readers will not develop cognitive deviations at the cultural level, nor will the deep meaning space preset by the original be dissolved. Relying on the ultimate goal of cross-cultural communication, the evaluation of reader acceptance focuses on examining the communication effect of the translated content among target-language audiences, judging whether the translation's mode of

expression is suitable for target readers' cognitive habits, enabling readers to fully perceive the original's narrative content and the cultural core behind it, and realizing the transmission of literary value in a cross-cultural context [3].

3. An empirical analysis of cross-cultural translation deviations in translations of classic British and American novels

3.1. Cultural misalignment deviations at the level of linguistic expression

The cultural misalignment of everyday expressions and forms of address is the core carrier of deviations at the level of linguistic expression. Based on a comparison of two widely circulated translations of Pride and Prejudice, specific forms of deviation can be identified. In the original work, common expressions involving tea-party small talk among the English gentry are used; in some parts of Wang Keyi's translation, the daily conversational habits of the Chinese urban class during the same period are directly applied, dissolving the class identity differences implied in the original context so that readers may misjudge the characters' social status hierarchy. Further observing deviations in forms of address, the original work has strict boundaries distinguishing different kinship relations and social ranks. In some parts of Sun Zhili's translation, the corresponding forms of address are simplified into common kinship terms used in China, blurring the social etiquette rules of the original era [4]. According to the evaluation criteria of cross-cultural translation, such deviations mostly stem from the translator's insufficient perception of the differences between the daily expression logics of the two cultures. Without transforming implicit cultural premises into expressions that fit target readers' cognition and directly making literal correspondences, semantic misalignment will occur, interfering with readers' accurate perception of the original's narrative details and affecting the transmission effect of the original's overall cultural connotation.

3.2. Cultural loss deviations at the level of image transmission

Image conversion in a cross-cultural context is the core carrier of the original's implicit cultural meaning, and its completeness of transmission directly affects the translation's restoration of the original's deep connotations. Based on a comparison of the two translations of Pride and Prejudice, when Wang Keyi's translation handles metaphorical expressions tied to the British manor hunting tradition in the original, it directly replaces the images with farming-related vehicles familiar to domestic readers, completely dissolving the gentry lifestyle characteristics implied in the original. Target readers cannot perceive the class-cultural orientation behind the images, which is a typical problem of meaning loss. Further observing the handling of allusive content, when Sun Zhili's translation handles allusive expressions related to European and American religious traditions in the original, it only makes literal conversion without adaptive transformation of the cultural references behind the allusions. Target readers will interpret allusive content with specific value judgments as ordinary scene descriptions, producing obvious connotative deviations [5]. Such deviations mostly stem from the translator's insufficient perception of the cultural associations behind images and failure to realize that the meaning of specific metaphors and allusions is deeply bound to the native cultural context. Direct literal conversion or arbitrary replacement of vehicles will greatly dissolve the special meanings carried by the original images and interfere with readers' perception of the original's deep cultural connotations.

3.3. Cultural misreading deviations at the level of value transmission

Implicit cultural elements of value orientation are the core carriers of the social attributes carried by classic British and American novels. Cognitive deviations in translation will directly distort the expression of group stance conveyed by the original. Based on translation examples related to views on marriage and love, when Wang Keyi's translation handles the relevant expressions of Elizabeth's rejection of Collins's proposal, it transforms the individual demand for marital autonomy implied in the original into an expression of resistance to marriage and love in the traditional Chinese context, dissolving the value orientation of female consciousness awakening implied in the original. Readers may easily misread the character's choice as a simple rejection based on class prejudice. Further observing translation examples related to class cognition, when Sun Zhili's translation handles Darcy's mention of class differences in his first proposal, it simplifies the rigid hierarchical cognition of the English gentry implied in the original into an ordinary expression of high or low status, stripping away the original's implicit critical tendency toward class contradictions in a specific era [6]. Such deviations mostly stem from the translator's default application of the value judgment standards of his or her own cultural context to the translation of the original content, without correspondingly sorting out the original's implicit temporal and group value stance. Ultimately, target-language readers will have directional misreadings of the original's core meaning, hindering the value resonance that literary communication in a cross-cultural context should achieve.

4. Optimization strategies for translating classic British and American novels from a cross-cultural perspective

4.1. Sorting cultural elements and establishing an advance documentation mechanism

Given the dispersed and hidden nature of cultural elements in classic British and American novels in the context of cross-cultural communication, translators will complete a full-text sorting of cultural elements before formally starting translation. Translators will read through the original text paragraph by paragraph, marking all directly appearing specific cultural markers, covering directly presented cultural content such as folk activities, religious ceremonies, and class forms of address. They will trace the cultural connotations of each marked element one by one, clarifying the element's background, specific meaning orientation, and applicable social scenarios, and organize all relevant information into standardized records[7]. After sorting explicit content, translators will shift their focus to excavating and organizing implicit cultural elements, examining sentence by sentence the cultural content embedded in textual details but not directly stated, covering implicit content such as social rules implied in dialogue details, value orientations carried by plot settings, and cultural traditions associated with image expressions. They will bind each implicit element to its corresponding contextual meaning, clarifying the element's association with the core narrative logic of the text, so as to avoid stripping away the deep cultural connotations carried by the element in subsequent translation. After all cultural elements are sorted, translators will carry out classification and documentation. They will systematically organize all marked and recorded cultural elements into three categories—folk customs, value orientations, and religious metaphors—and supplement each element with reference directions for transformation that fit the expressive logic of the target culture. The documented content will serve as the core reference for subsequent translation work. All translation content involving cultural elements will be verified against the documented records to reduce the possibility of cultural omission or semantic misalignment in translation, laying a solid preliminary foundation for the complete transmission

of the original's narrative content and deep cultural core. Translators will also reserve room for dynamic adjustment of the documented content. If new cultural elements not included in the documentation are found during subsequent translation, they can be added at any time to the corresponding classification module, ensuring the completeness and adaptability of cultural element sorting and avoiding translation deviations caused by omissions in preliminary investigation [8].

4.2. Adapting to the target context and adopting flexible translation methods

Based on the semantic characteristics of different cultural elements and the cognitive habits of target-language audiences, translators will flexibly choose differentiated translation methods to balance the transmission of the original cultural appearance and the efficiency of reader understanding. The applicable scenarios of foreignizing translation are concentrated on folk custom and religious metaphor elements with unique regional markers. Translators transform the original's exclusive cultural symbols according to their original meanings while supplementing shallow explanations that fit the expressive logic of the target language. They will not arbitrarily replace the original images or dissolve the special cultural attributes carried by the elements. From the perspective of cultural communication adaptability, the applicable scenarios of domesticating translation are concentrated on content with excessive cognitive differences from the target culture and prone to misreading if directly converted, mainly corresponding to some implicit cultural elements of value orientation and daily expression. Based on the completed cultural documentation, translators transform the original's embedded meaning logic that target-language audiences find difficult to understand directly into expressions fitting local cognitive habits. They will not directly copy literal content and cause readers' cognitive deviations, nor will they destroy the original's core narrative logic and emotional transmission. In light of the bidirectional attribute of cross-cultural communication, translators should dynamically balance the two translation methods, not rigidly apply a single translation model to all content. For different types of cultural elements in the same text, they should flexibly switch among suitable translation methods. For content involving the original's core value expression and cultural iconic content, foreignizing translation is preferred to preserve the original appearance; for non-core daily narrative and transitional expressions, domesticating translation can be used to lower readers' comprehension threshold [9]. Translators will control the scale of translation, neither arbitrarily tampering with the original's core meaning to fit the target culture nor deliberately adopting obscure expressions to preserve the cultural appearance and increase readers' cognitive burden. The selection of all translation methods is carried out with the aim of completely transmitting the original's cultural core and reducing cross-cultural communication deviations, so that readers from different cultural backgrounds can smoothly perceive the original's narrative charm and cultural value, and also encounter the unique content of heterogeneous cultures during reading, realizing the communication value of literary works in a cross-cultural context.

4.3. Strengthening reader orientation and conducting post-translation adaptation verification

Based on the audience-oriented characteristics of literary communication in a cross-cultural context, post-translation adaptation verification can effectively remedy omissions in the earlier translation stage and narrow the cognitive distance between the translation and target-language readers. Through a process of selecting reader groups under the target-language cultural background, translators will define test groups matching the target audience profile. The groups cover ordinary readers of different age levels and different amounts

of literary reading experience, excluding professional translation researchers, ensuring that feedback fits the real reading perceptions of ordinary audiences. In connection with the actual process of translation testing, translators will divide the complete draft into independent reading units matching the original's narrative logic and send reading content to the test groups in batches. After each delivery, they will collect and organize reader feedback. The collection scope covers three core types: readers' points of confusion, points of content misjudgment, and discomfort with expression. No additional background guidance is provided for the reading content, ensuring the authenticity and validity of feedback. From the perspective of organizing feedback content, translators will compare all collected feedback with the earlier documented cultural elements one by one and distinguish the specific attributes of feedback problems. For content involving misalignment in cultural element expression, they will adjust the content according to the applicable rules of foreignizing and domesticating translation. For content with insufficient linguistic fluency, they will optimize expression without changing the core meaning, and will not arbitrarily adjust the original's implicit cultural meaning orientation. Relying on the iterative process of adjusted content, translators will resend the revised local content to the test groups for a second reading verification, confirming that the revised expression neither triggers readers' cognitive deviations nor dissolves the cultural core carried by the original, and only incorporating it into the final draft after the reading feedback on the corresponding content no longer contains concentrated misunderstanding problems [10]. From the actual effect of cross-cultural communication, this kind of post-translation verification can effectively lower the cultural cognitive threshold of target-language readers while preserving the original's unique cultural attributes, improve the communication efficiency of heterogeneous cultural content in different contexts, and enable the cross-cultural value of literary works to be transmitted more widely. It conforms to the core evaluation criteria of literary translation from a cross-cultural perspective and builds a smooth channel for audiences in different cultural contexts to perceive the charm of heterogeneous literature.

5. Conclusion

Translation of classic British and American novels from a cross-cultural perspective is essentially a bidirectional balancing process that takes into account both the preservation of the original's cultural core and the cognitive adaptation of target-language audiences. It cannot remain merely at the level of linguistic equivalence. The complete transmission of implicit cultural elements is the core difficulty of translation work. Translators need to break away from a single language-conversion mindset and establish a culture-first translation logic, forming a full-process quality control mechanism from early cultural element sorting and documentation, to flexible selection of translation methods in the middle stage, and to reader-oriented adaptation verification in the later stage. The application of relevant translation strategies can not only preserve to the greatest extent the unique cultural attributes and deep meaning space of the original classic British and American novels, but also lower the cultural cognitive threshold of target-language audiences, promote cross-context communication of heterogeneous literary works, and build an effective literary carrier for exchanges and mutual learning among different cultures.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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