Studies of
English Cultural Translation:
A Coursebook

英语文化翻译学教程

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英语文化翻译学系列教材

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总　　序

　　高等学校英语专业英语文化翻译学系列教材《英语文化翻译学教程》（英文版）、《英语文化翻译学实践教程》、《英语语言文化与翻译应用教程》及《英语习语翻译对照手册》正式出版了，中南大学出版社做了一件十分有意义的事。该系列教材的编者长期研究语言、文化、翻译三者之间的关系，并在大学执教相关课程。编者把在教学、科研以及指导学生学习和研究中积累的学问和经验写成此教材，是文化翻译学理论和实践研究方面取得的可喜成果。在文化翻译学学科体系尚待建立、研究方法尚待探索的情况下，该系列教材的出版无疑具有重要的意义。

　　翻译是一种非常复杂的语际活动。翻译离不开语言的转换，但远比单纯的语言转换要复杂。其中一个重要的原因就是语言反映文化，而且受文化的制约。要成功地进行语言转换，不但要掌握两种语言，还要熟悉两种语言所代表的文化，并在进行语言转换的同时传达文化信息。在国外，翻译研究从重视语言转换转向重视文化的转换，许多研究者把翻译看作一种跨文化交际行为，有人干脆用"跨文化交际"（intercultural communication）、"跨文化合作"（intercultural cooperation）、"文化交融"（acculturation）来指代"翻译"。利用语言学、文化学、翻译学的研究成果来探讨语言、文化、翻译三者之间关系的文化翻译学，为翻译研究提供了新的视角，开辟了新的领域，符合翻译研究的新趋向，具有广阔的发展前景。

　　英语文化翻译学系列教材不同于一般的翻译教材，它把英汉翻译中的文化现象作为直接研究对象并兼顾相关的对比研究，运用文化学、语言学、社会学、语言国情学、跨文化交际学等相关学科的知识来考察文化与翻译的关系，研究译文的生成，其研究重点在于英汉两种语言中各种表达方法的文化内涵及

其文化探源，旨在消除翻译中的文化障碍，进行积极而又高效的文化交流。众所周知，文化障碍往往影响翻译的效率和质量，使交际者遭遇种种尴尬，甚至使他们间接蒙受重大损失。究其原因，就是他们对翻译中的文化因素认识不足，缺少沟通两种文化的意识和技巧。这套系列教材的使用，将在这方面对学习翻译和从事翻译的人提供启示和帮助，使他们在翻译中加强文化意识，克服文化障碍，提高翻译水准，使跨文化交际得以顺利进行，实现既定的目标。

本教材是英汉翻译教材编写的一次可贵的尝试，表现了编者独到的目光和创新的精神。尽管作为一种尝试它不可能是完美的，但重要的是它朝正确的方向迈出了可喜的第一步。相信它在使用过程中会不断补充、修改、完美，为文化翻译学的学科建设作出自己的一份贡献。

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蒋坚松

2003 年 8 月于长沙

Preface

Definitely speaking, translation deals with culture, but it doesn't mean that *Translation* is equal to *English Cultural Translation Studies: a Coursebook*, etc. Those who say so maybe don't know translation or know nothing about translation at all. Translation is the process of a written or spoken rendering of the meaning of a word, speech, book, or other text, in another language. According to the famous English linguist Geoffrey Leech, translation is to find a way to express the sense of a word in another language, while *English Cultural Translation Studies: a Couvsebook* (*ECTS*), just as its name implies, is a learning which studies the translating principles and methods of language and cultural phenomena which translation activity deals with, it takes the cultural phenomena as its direct object of research, takes intercultural exchange as its main purpose and probes into the mutual relationship between culture and translation including their corresponding laws of language conversion. And therefore *Translation* is quite different from *ECTS*.

ECTS is a newly developing learning—a science which has a close relation with culturology, cultural linguistics, intercultural communications, social semiotics, sociolinguistics, linguistic national conditions, logics, vague linguistics, applied linguistics, rhetoric, etc. And it is necessary and important for colleges and universities to teach this learning because, as the intorduction to this textbook says, with the rapid development of science and technology and with the uninterrupted expansion of information revolution, especially after China's joining WTO, transnational, cross-racial, intercultural exchanges are becoming increasing-ly extensive and frequent, and mutual contacts and commercial intercourse of different peoples show that cultural interchange and cultural integration, accompanied by economic integration, to some extent, have come to every aspect of life and to every participant. Although translation is taught in colleges and universities, the students most frequently make mistakes in translation. Of course, it's cultural blocks that cause them to make mistakes, that is to say, translation hasn't helped them avoid these mistakes more effectively, while *ECTS* first helps them to pay attention to

cultural blocks and try to overcome such blocks. It is practically proved that it works well and can help to better the quality of translation and further help people carry out foreignization and domestication to improve translation of literature in our country so that people can have the chance to win Nobel prize for literature. And maybe this saying seems a little exaggerated, but it shows that it is at least a goal we'll strive for no matter whether it can be realized or not. I dare say you won't fail in improving your translation if you and your college or university study this learning.

This textbook is specially written for college and university students who major in English or bilingual translation, including undergraduates, postgraduates, students of junior college, English teachers and translation researchers and students who don't major in English but like bilingual translation.

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to supervisor of doctors of translation of Hunan Normal University, Professor Jiang Jiansong, President of the Translators' Association of Hunan Province, who has kindly written the first preface of this textbook, and Professor Tu Guoyuan, head of School of Foreign Languages of Central South University, who has read the textbook and given some very precious advice.

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Li Yanlin

July 8, 2003

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Contents

Introduction

With the rapid development of science and technology and with the uninterrupted expansion of information revolution, especially after China's joining WTO, transnational, cross-racial, cross-cultural exchanges are becoming increasingly extensive and frequent, and mutual contacts and commercial intercourse of different peoples show that cultural interchange and cultural integration, accompanied by economic integration, to some extent, have come to every aspect of life and to every participant. When an Asian has reached Europe, or a Chinese has got to Britain or the United States, or a European has come to Asia, or an Englishman and an American have arrived in China. Definitely speaking, when all the contacts go smoothly, they are not aware of the existence of national boundaries. Only when they encounter something troubling them can they realize that they have met with the strange culture of a foreign country.

Although there are various kinds of means of transmitting culture and promoting culture exchange, or even the approaches are, at times, different, it is essential that people should depend on the use of language. Language is the carrier, container and instrument of culture. To bring about the function of bridge and tie of the language in the transnational, cross-racial and cross-cultural exchanges and to make the strange culture familiar to people in a foreign country, it is natural that people should depend on language to carry out translation. It is the translators that can carry out the translation through language. Nowadays the development of science and technology has brought the computer-aid-translation means to our translation. Without language, it would be difficult to turn the cross-cultural communication into reality.

1. Definition of Culture and Its Summary

Someone says that the word "culture" is an alien word coming from German "kultur", which can be dated back to a very long time ago, when it referred to reclamation of land and cultivation of plants and physical mind, especially to the cultivation of artistic and moral ability and natural gift (See *Culture and Language*,

compiled by Wang Fu-xiang, etal, 341). From the angle of cross-cultural exchanges, the word "culture", which was referred to the level of agenda by people engaged in foreign languages, began in the 1980's when China had just reformed and opened to the outside world. At that time the Chinese people were aware that great communicative barriers caused by cultural variation existed in cultural exchanges to the outside world. Naturally in school and college education, including the secondary specialized education and the higher specialization, people attached great importance to the essentiality and urgency of culture infusion, for, at that time, cultural clashes caused by cultural variation kept reaching their ears. And many ridiculous mistakes brought about the failure of communication. It was said that the cultural clashes did bring about some economic losses.

According to some data, the word "culture" existed in ancient Chinese, earlier than that in the German language. The Chinese etymology says that the Chinese word "wen" refers to the unified formal ritual and its rules and regulations including the legal clauses, that the Chinese word "hua" refers to the nature, or the natural functions. Generally speaking, in the words of our time, "wen hua" refers to the sum total of social science and natural science. The writer thinks this is a kind of explanation which the ancient Chinese people made to culture and gave its connotation, obviously it's the ancient Chinese who created the word "culture". Nowadays in the academic circles, the scholars have been arguing about the implication of culture, one may well say that the benevolent see benevolence and the wise see wisdom, that is to say, different people have different views. According to *A Dictionary of Current Chinese*, the word "culture" has three meanings: ① the sum total of material wealth and cultural and ethical wealth, especially the cultural and ethical wealth, such as literature, art, education, science; ② an archaeological term, which refers to the synthesis of historical traces and remains never influenced by different places they existed in the same historical period, including the identical instruments, utensils and manufacturing techniques, and they belong to the same cultural trait, such as Yangshao culture—a culture of the Neolithic period, relics of which were first unearthed in Yangshao village, Mianchi County, Henan Province, in 1921, Longshan culture—a culture of the latter part of the Neolithic Age but later than Yangshao culture, and the relics of Longshan culture were first unearthed in Longshan Town near Jinan City, Shandong Province. Among the relics are some pieces of bright black pottery, so Longshan culture can be named culture of Black

Pottery; ③ the ability and general knowledge in the use of Chinese characters, or of choice of words and building of sentence: learn to read and write cultural (educational) level. (See: *A Dictionary of Current Chinese*, 1994: 1204).

Meanwhile on the same page, we can find three interpretations of *Wenming* (*civilization*): ① civilization, culture: a country with an ancient civilization; material (or spiritual) civilization; ② the society has developed to a higher degree and is highly civilized: civilized society, civilized school; ③ in old times it referred to customs, personal habits, things of present western colouring. From here we can see the word "culture" contains the meanings of two levels, in English, the first one is culture and civilization, the second one is education.

The word "culture" seems difficult for people to define. Quite a number of researchers have tried to explain it, including anthropologists, sociologists, psychiatrist and other such scholars. According to the statistics by Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952), there are more than 160 researchers who advanced their own definitions of culture, and Kroeber and Kluckhohn conscientiously made an analysis of the different definitions given by them, these two scholars thought all the definitions are included in these six types: ① descriptive particularization; ② of historic significance; ③ standardized; ④ of psychology; ⑤ structural; ⑥ hereditary.

Kroeber thinks that culture should have five connotations: ① It includes the behaviour pattern and the pattern of guiding behaviours; ② It just depends on acquisition whether the pattern is implied or apparent. The ways and means of study are embodied by the artificial structural notation; ③ The behaviour pattern and the pattern materialization of guiding behaviour are embodied in artificial products, therefore these products belong to culture; ④ Historically formed values are the core of culture, culture of different qualities can be distinguished according to the difference of values; ⑤ The cultural system is the product and result of human activity as well as the cause to place restrictions on the ways and means of human activity. (Quoted from a secondary source: Qin Guang-guang, *A Dictionary of Culturology*).

According to Kluckhohn, culture refers to all the ways of life created in human history, including the explicit and the implicit, the reasonable and the unreasonable, and everything far from being reasonable or unreasonable. They exist as *the latent guide to the action of people in a certain period* (Quoted from a secondary source:

Qin Guang-guang, *A Dictionary of Culturology*). Later on, Kluckhohn made a further explanation to culture (See *Mirrors of Human Beings*) : culture is an aspect of human life. And this is because people belong to the same group and what they have learned and shared with the other members. It, different from the heredity of our human bodies, is the legacy of our society. It is the main factor which can make us live in the same society. It provides us with existing schemes to solve problems and helps us estimate the behaviours of others and make our actions understandable to others.

Having made a contrastive analysis of the definitions of culture given by Kroeber and Kluckhohn, we can easily find the difference of what they each lay emphasis on. The culture that Kroeber places stress on deals with the abstract mode of behaviour and the materialized artificial products of the behaviour mode and values are the core of culture; whereas kluckhohn emphasized that culture is heredity of the society and human acquisition and the guide to human action.

Malinowski, the anthropologist of the functional school, points out in his book *On Culture*(1987) :

Culture is the customs of human body and soul, including a set of instruments and a series of customs, and they satisfy the needs of the human beings directly or indirectly. All the cultural essential elements, if what we think is right, must be in action, in force, and what's more, effective.

We think that culture is a closely-organized system and in the meanwhile it can be divided into two basic parts: implements and customs, from here we can divide it into smaller parts or units.

Obviously, what Malinowski lays emphasis on is the function of culture, namely, culture is what can satisfy/meet a certain need of human beings and at the same time he emphatically points out that culture can be divided into implements and customs.

Some scholars of our time have carefully studied the definition of culture. They are Samovar and Porter, David Brown, Geert Hofstede, et al.

Samovar and Porter think that culture is a large crowd, through the efforts of many generations, both the individual and the collective that obtains knowledge, experience, conviction and value, attitude, role, space relation, accumulation of the world view and the material things and belongings they have got. Culture can be shown in linguistic patterns and the forms of activities and behaviour. These patterns
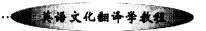
and forms are prototype of people's adaptive action and communicative approach, which makes people live in the society of specific technical stage of development, definite time, specific geographic environment (1988).

The two authors of this definition attempt to have the connotation of culture included, so they add attitude, role, the space relation, the world view, etc, besides knowledge, conviction and value. And what is more, the two authors specially add linguistic patterns to the definition, which is put on the same position as the behavioural model. As to what they said: "... a large crowd, through the efforts of many generations both the individual and the collective, obtained... accumulation", which roughly has the same meaning as what Kluckhohn said about "the social heredity."

Scholars studying the actual issues try to make their own explanations to culture, for instance, the cross-cultural communicational expert David Brown says in his book *Helping Across Cultures*: Culture is the mutual convictions, customs, mode of life and complex of behaviour of people who occupy specific geographic region. Their culture... has made answers to various kinds of questions about everyday life, like what should be eaten, what should not be eaten? What kind of clothes to wear, how to say hello to the neighbours, how to treat the enemy, how to work, how to play? etc. —Briefly speaking, what should be done when we encounter problems in life? Culture helps us explain the world/the universe and interpret the origin of the universe and who will dominate the world and the relations between mankind and God and explain the endless variations of the nature which are terrifying phenomena. In short, culture is the majority of the group—if it isn't the whole—which is the guide to life accepted by people.

The administration psychologist Geert Hofstede, in his latest book *Cultures and Organizations*, he calls culture "the mental programming" or "software of the mind", and he thinks that culture is to the person as/what programming is to the computer. The operation of the computer depends on the software. The computer works according to what the programming has written. Culture is precisely like the prewritten programming, which resolves people's behaviour. If people want to be divorced from their own culture and act, they will find that their action is as difficult as the operation of the computer without software. But Hofstede points out, "The behaviour of a person is only partly decided by his mental programming: he has the basic ability to stray from the mental programming and has the ability to act on the

basis of the new, creative, destructive and unexpected ways. This is another aspect that a human being is different from a computer. "Then Hofstede separates culture into two types of culture: "the first and the second". He says, "In most of the Western languages, culture usually means 'civilization', especially referring to this kind of upbringing like education, literature, art, which is the culture of narrow sense, sometimes called 'the first type of culture'. The culture, as the software of the mind, is the use of broad sense, which is frequently used by social anthropologists and this is 'the second type of culture'." Some culturologists name "the first type of culture" "culture with a big C" and "the second type of culture" "culture with a small c".

To sum up, culture is a complicated concept, which has both the broad sense and narrow sense on a certain occasion, the culture of narrow sense lays stress on spirit, dealing with the social superstructure and customs and habits; and the culture of broad sense deals with different aspects of the society, including the material culture, the culture of the social system and convention and the spiritual culture. In addition, it must be pointed out that culture has such characteristics as the nature of society, of sign, of nationality, of region, of times, of open and convergence.

2. Definition of Translation and Its Summary

Translation is getting more and more important, which is known to all. and what is translation, anyway? Now let's see the following:

According to the English dictionary, translation is the process of a written or spoken rendering of the meaning of a word, speech, book, or other text, in another language. But in the practical society, different people have different opinions. The famous English linguist Geoffrey Leech thought in his book *Semantics* that translation is to find a way to express the sense of a word in another language. Chairman of ITA (国际译联), Professor Anna Lenowa said in the book *The Theoretical Essentials of General Translation* (1985), "As a process, translation is a spoken or written activity, with the purpose of making the spoken or written speeches (writings) existing in a language reappear in another language and keeping the invariance of the contents and quality of the original text and the correctness of the original author." The professor went on saying "As the result of translating activity, translation is the analoque of the original text. The ideal translation is the ideal analoque of the original

text, which is produced in the new society, culture and the actual language and plays a role in the realization of the reality. "People shouldn't regard"analoque"here as the absoluteness of the original text, the word-for-word language analogy and inflexible duplication and should understand it as the analogy of the entire system, that is, the analogy of structural function. According Yang Shi-zhang (2000(3): 73. *Foreign Languages*): There are two translating ways—symbol translation and sense translation. The former refers to translation conducted at the level of symbol form. Translators don't give deliberate consideration to the essence of the appeared/existing symbol but respond audibly to it directly. This translation is automatic, which is transformed just like from one form of a language symbol to another form of another language symbol. Sense translation requires the translator first to determine the referent(sense) of the language symbol or the speech situation, then try to find the equivalent symbol in the target language. Yang Yan-song thinks that translation is not only the transformation and contrast of two languages but also the comparison and blending of two cultures (Yang, P103, *Translation Theory in Hunan*). Cao Hejian thinks that translation is a transforming process of a language and also a transforming/converting process of ways of thinking. (Cao, P89, *Translation Theory in Hunan*). The American translation theorist Eugene A. Nida believes thet the translation we call in the target language refers to the information reproducing the original text by using the closest and the most natural equivalence from semanteme to style. What Nida states here is accepted by most of the people in the circle of translation, for this statement not only emphasizes most closely but also most naturally "to reproduce the information of the original text", that is to say, the translated text should be faithful not only to the original text, but also to the writing style so that it is favourable for the readers of the translated text to achieve the same effect as the readers of the original text. According to *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *Macropaedia*, translation is a continuous concomitant of contact between two mutually incomprehensible tongues and one that does not lead either to suppression or extension of either is translation.

From what is mentioned above, the essence of translation is a cross-language transformational activity, though the translators both at home and abroad and some authoritative dictionaries have given the definition of translation with different emphases. From the angle of culture, translation is even an activity of cross – cultural exchange in the form of phones and words. In ancient times when there were no written languages, translation only dealt with oral interpretation, later on there were

written languages, so written translation appeared. With the application of the computers, the founding of semiology (Semiotics) and the improvement of the photoelectric sign and code techniques, there appear new ways of translation such as man-machine intertranslation and mechanical/machine translation, so that we can add something new to the definition of translation. According to *An English-Chinese Dictionary of Modern Science and Technology* (1980, Shanghai Press of Science and Technology), "Translation is to change the information of the computer from one language into another one, or change the characters from one form into another one."

As far as the function is concerned, translation is the tie and bridge by using the language as a tool to link different cultures. But how we can give full play to the tie and bridge of cross-cultural(intercultural) exchange correctly and effectively and how we can express the cultural information correctly, closely and fluently that one language bears/contains have been for ages the aims that scholars of foreign languages especially the translators have been paying close attention to and have been in pursuit of and what is more, the important subjects that the translators and translation theorists both at home and abroad have been approaching and discussing.

In the history of modern translation, the first real western monograph on translation theory, I am afraid, is the book *Essay on the Principles of Translating* written by a famous English scholar, the professor of Edinburgh University, whose name is Alexander F. Tytler, and the translation theorist brought up the three principles of translation in the book published in 1792:

(1) A translation should give a complete transcription of the ideas of the original work;

(2) The style and manner of writing should be of the same character as that of the original;

(3) A translation should have all the ease of the original composition. It is generally thought that, according to the order of the arrangement, the principles(1) and (2) reflect the faithfulness of ideas, style and manner of writing, and the principle(3) reflects the faithfulness of expression, showing that the translator should not just imitate the form of the original but try to know the author's soul and make it speak the author's mind, that's to say, the translator should try to grasp the spirit of the original and express it in very good target language instead of the original. There is no doubt about it that Tytler's three principles of translating have had great and far-reaching influence in the circles of translation and laid the foundation of/for the

theory of translating work.

Ma Jian-zhong, an expert of translation at the end of the Qing Dynasty in China, wrote a book titled *A Suggestion of Setting Up a Translating Academy* and he pointed out, if you take a book, you'll have to read it over and over so as to grasp its spiritual essence, try to figure out its style and understand its mood and translate it with great facility, and the translated text must be exactly like the original one without the slightest error, and the readers can get as much from the translated text as from the original one, only such translation can be called the first-class translation. （一书到手，经营反复，确知其意旨之所在，而摹写其神情，仿佛其语气，然后心悟神解，振笔而书，译成之文适其所译而止，而曾无毫发出入其间，夫而后能使阅者得之益与观原文无异是则为善译也已。）[1]Here Ma Jian-zhong has given us such exposition which was quite fresh in sight of his time, telling us what attitude the translator should have and what should be kept as the standards of translation and what the translating process is. As Mr Ma didn't translate some works, people have paid no attention to him and his theory, but people have had different opinions on what he stated: "the translated text should be exactly like the original one without the slightest error."Can it be realized that you translate some works without the slightest error? I think this is an impractical idea—an ideal. With the exception of this, we should admit that most of what he said is of great use and can serve our translation today, especially the translating process. If the translators had noticed his theory, the translation of China might have been much better. It's a pity that his translation theory produced a very limited influence on translation in the past.

Yan Fu(1854 ~ 1921), living in the late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China, was then a famous translator and through a lot of translation practice, he summed up the three translating standards of three Chinese characters in 1898(the other saying is in 1897): "In translation, there are three aspects difficult to bring about: fidelity/faithfulness, smoothness/fluency and elegance. It is no easy work to realize ' fidelity/faithfulness '! If there is only fidelity/faithfulness without smoothness/fluency, the translation doesn't amount to translation. From here we can see fluency/smoothness is of great importance."（译事三难:信、达、雅。求其信已大难矣! 顾信矣不达，虽译犹不译也，则达尚焉。）

What's mentioned above is what Yan Fu used to measure/judge what can be

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〔1〕 转引自《翻译研究论文集》(1894～1948)，北京:外语教学与研究出版社，1984 年。