

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## 内 容 提 要

翻译是一种复杂的跨语言、跨文化交际活动。翻译过程主要包括三个方面：对原文的理解，源语向的语的转换以及译文的形成。语境在这三个方面的作用不仅十分重要，而且必不可少。

在对原文的理解上，语境起着确定意义的作用。这里，意义不仅包括传统语义学研究范畴的概念意义，联想意义和主题意义，还包括语用学所研究的语用意义；在源语向的语转换过程中，译者对源语与的语之间语言语境和文化语境的差异的认识和区别能力起着非常重要的作用，它关系到词义及结构的调整的顺利进行，以及译文的形成；在译文形成过程中，的语语境是检验译文可读性、可接受性的标尺，只有译文符合译入语的语言及文化语境，译文才能独立存在并在的语读者群中获得生命。译入语语境包括译入语的搭配习惯，语言组织方式和读者的文化经验背景。

在英汉翻译实践中，语境能够帮助我们解决语言的各个层面和文化方面的实际问题。如翻译中不存在字字对等的原因，如何利用语境意识识别成语和固定搭配，英汉句式结构调整的根据和技巧，以及文化语境差异的弥补等等。

## ABSTRACT

Context has been studied in various fields of learning, among which translation is one of them. The dependability of translation on context lies in the following three aspects of the translation process: the understanding of the source text, the transmitting skills between the two languages in question, and the producing of a sound and adequate target text.

This thesis, focusing on the importance of context in translating from English to Chinese, falls in five parts:

Chapter one introduces the development and classification of context by various schools and the kinds of context this thesis will discuss—linguistic context, situational context, personal idiolect and the context of the target language;

Chapter two discusses the role context plays in understanding the source text. In this chapter, the main topic is the different kinds of meaning and how context may help in determining them, for meaning is the center of message transmitting process. Here *meaning* includes not only the semantic meaning as studied in traditional and functional semantics but also the pragmatic meaning which focuses on how contextual features determine or influence the interpretation of utterances and takes into consideration the intention of the speaker. This chapter also explains the relationship between grammar and context in translating from English to Chinese. Grammatical analysis is very important in understanding the source text, but it is not final, for the same syntactic structure sometimes carry different interpretations, and the syntactical ambiguity can only be removed by studying into the context.

Chapter three discusses the function of context in producing the target text. It gives a general introduction of the target language context, including the linguistic and cultural contexts of the target language and the cultural reality of the target readers, which ensures that the target text exists in its own right and gains new life among the target readers and target language and culture;

Chapter four mainly discusses the major problems relating to context in producing an adequate target text. It stresses the importance of recognizing the differences between the source and target languages and cultures, and explores theoretically and practically some questions relating to context in the translating process such as the reasons of the non-existence of word-for-word equivalence between two languages, how context consciousness helps a translator to recognize an idiom or a set phrase, the semantic and syntactic adjustments according to the target context, the stylistic equivalence, the problem of cultural gap and the strategies for it.

Chapter five is the conclusion.

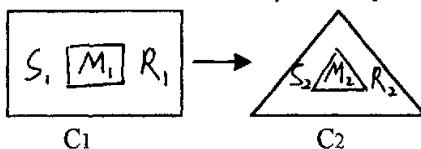
## Chapter One

### I Nature of Translation

Translation is an interlingual and intercultural communication, the process of which is very complicated. I. A. Richards describes it as “very probably the most complex type of event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos”.

Qian Zhongshu compared translation to a long and arduous journey the translator had to take, with the source and target languages being at the starting and terminal points respectively. According to him, there are gaps and pitfalls during the journey, which will inevitably cause more or less distortion in meaning and tone of the source language.

E.A. Nida illustrates the process by a diagram:



In which: M<sub>1</sub>= the source message; R<sub>1</sub>= source language readers; S<sub>1</sub>= the source text author; M<sub>2</sub>= the target message; S<sub>2</sub>= the target text author; R<sub>2</sub>= target language readers.

Nida explained that the squares represented the source language and the triangles represented the “equivalent” communication in the target language.

According to the diagram, a translator translating from English to Chinese assumes the position of R<sub>1</sub>, but he can only **approximate** the role of R<sub>1</sub>. At the same time, the translator becomes S<sub>2</sub> who reproduces

$M_1$  as  $M_2$ , so that  $R_2$  may respond in ways essentially similar to those in which the original  $R_1$  respond.

Questions arise here: Why can a translator only approximate the role of  $R_1$ ? In transmitting from  $M_1$  to  $M_2$ , what are the pitfalls or gaps that might cause distortion in meaning and tone? In order to have a close study of the problems, we should first make a close study of the diagram. The transmitting process illustrated by the diagram includes three related parts: 1) The understanding of the source text, which is the first step; and based on the first step, 2) The finding of Chinese equivalence at different levels and aspects of language; 3) The checking of whether the target text can exist in its own right.

As for the first step, it involves both the translator's linguistic and cultural knowledge in general and the knowledge indicated by linguistic and situational context. The latter two steps involve both the translator's literary capacity of the target language, which requires the translator to be fully aware of the differences between the two languages in question at both grammar and usage levels, and a strong sense of context consciousness for his mother tongue. Good understanding does not automatically lead to good translation, for the source text is transparent in grammar and usage while those of the target language are opaque. Besides, the response of target readers involves anticipatory work of the translator.

Through the above analysis, we can see clearly that context is crucial in producing qualified and effective translation work. Many scholars have studied the meaning and function of context. As Sperber and Wilson put, "the context does much more than filter out inappropriate interpretations;

it provides premises without which the implicature cannot be inferred at all”.

## II A Brief Introduction to Context

Context is a concept that had widely been studied and applied in various fields of learning—philosophy, logic, sociology, etc.—even before it attracted the attention of linguists. Aristotle, father of logic, touched upon the topic of context many times. He said that we could decide whether a noun was uni-sense or multisense by the method of checking whether its antonym has several senses. The book *Logic in Linguistics* written by Swedish scholars says that most utterances are context-dependent, and in order to have a thorough understanding of the sentence, one must know the context in which the sentence is uttered. The book divides context into intensional context and extensional context, and takes the following two sentences as examples to show the difference.

- (1) Bill is thinking of his future wife.
- (2) Bill is kissing his future wife.

*Kissing* can only provide the extensional context, while *thinking* may provide either an *intensional* context or *extensional* context.

In sociology, context is divided into subjective context and objective context. The objective context refers to social background, cultural tradition, cultural environment, social norms, ways of thinking, history, and the physical environment, etc.; subjective context refers to the status of the participant, including such subjective elements as knowledge, experience, age, sex, identity, mentality, purpose, style, quality and so on.

In 1923, the famous linguist and translator Bronislaw Malinowski first raised the question of “context” in his article *The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages* (a supplement for *Meanings of Meaning* collaborated on by Ogden and Richards) based on his field work in the primitive culture of the Trobriand Island off eastern New Guinea. On the island, he found the indigenous language difficult to be translated into English. For example, people rowing a canoe call the oar “wood”. Malinowski explains that in understanding the word “wood”, one must consider the situation in which the word ‘wood’ appears. He therefore points out that the meaning of an utterance does not come from the ideas of text in which the utterance occurs, and writes, “utterances and situation are bound up inextricably with each other and the context of situation is indispensable for the understanding of the words”, and the meaning of spoken utterances can always be determined by the context of situation. Malinowski distinguishes context of situation into three types: (1) situation in which speech interrelates with bodily activity, which means that the meaning of a word is not given by the physical properties of its referent, but by its function. e.g., a verb receives its meaning through an active participation in this action; (2) narrative situations, which he further divides into “the situation of the moment of narration” and “the situation referred to by the narrative”. The first case is “made up of the respectable social intellectuals and emotional attitudes of those present”, and the second case derives its meaning from the context referred to (as in a fairy tale); (3) situations in which speech is used to fill a speech vacuum—“phatic communion”, which refers to cases of “language used in free, aimless, social intercourse”.

J. R. Firth, the London school linguist, made a distinction between the linguistic context and the situational context, with the former referring to words or sentences that immediately precede and/or follow a word or passage, and the latter the relation between language and social environment. He called the former “context of language” and the latter “context of situation”. He further developed the concept in 1950 in his work *Individualism and Language in Society*. In the book, Firth defines context of situation as the entire cultural setting of the speech and the personal history of the participants rather than as simply the context of human activity going on at the moment. He defines meaning as the relationship between an element at any level and its context on that level.

M. A. K. Halliday, another representative of the London school, who was influenced by Firth and finished his Ph.D thesis under the tutorship of Firth, contributed greatly to the further understanding of context. He posed the term of “discourse”, and viewed a discourse in three aspects: field, tenor, and mode of discourse:

Field of discourse reflects the purpose of the language user in the situation a text occurs. The purpose or role of the language may be technical or non-technical. Non-technical roles such as “establishing personal contact” have a number of possible related fields such as “weather”, “health”, “current news”, while technical roles relate to specialist fields, for example, a linguist giving a lecture in class is expected to use many items like “phonology”, “morphology”, “syntax”. Field of discourse determines the speaker’s choice of linguistic items. Linguistic choices will vary according to whether the speaker is taking part in a football match or discussing football; making a political speech

or discussing politics; performing an operation or discussing medicine.

Tenor of discourse refers to the relationships between the people taking part in the discourse. The language a person uses varies depending on such interpersonal relationships as mother/child, doctor/patient, or superior/inferior in status.

Mode of discourse refers to the role language is playing (speech, essay, lecture, instruction) and the way it is transmitted (spoken, written). Linguistic choices are influenced by these dimensions. He stressed: Field, tenor and mode of discourse, these three factors are combined together to form the language context.

In 1965, an American sociolinguist Fishman raised the idea of register. He stated that register was the social context governed by behavior rules universally conformed to, including place, time, identity and subject, to put it more plainly, *where, when and who*.

Another sociolinguist who deserves mentioning is Hymes. In his book *Interacting Relations between Language and Social Background: Examples*, he defines context as “form and content of text, setting, participants, key, medium, genre and interactional norms, and so on”. According to this definition, discourse itself is the componential part of context.

Chomsky, a representative of the transformational-generative grammar school, also attached great importance to context by introducing semantic analysis in his later theory. He pointed out that in studying semantics, we must bear in mind the function of non-linguistic factors and “We cannot determine the truth condition of a sentence—even a simplest one—without the context in which the sentence occurs”.

Context attracted Chinese scholars' attention at the very early stage of human civilization. Du Yu concluded that, according to the writing style of Spring & Autumn Period, one word was enough to express the attitude, but it must be used in sentences to form a clear meaning. Some sentences are the context of one word. Although one word could express the judgment in the writing style of Spring & Autumn period, it must be accompanied by several words to make the meaning clear.

In the early 1930's, Chen Wangdao advanced the theory that "rhetoric methods should conform to situation and purpose of writing" in his book entitled *Gist of Rhetoric* (《修辞学发凡》). By "situation" he referred to the specific environment under which the article was written. The environment of the text consists of six elements: first, the purpose of writing, whether to persuade or inform or dispute; second, the subject being discussed, whether daily trifles or academic researches; third, the participants of the speech, that is the relationship between the addresser and the addressee; fourth, where the article or speech is given; fifth, the time, including the immediate time and the age in which the event happens; and sixth, how the writer or speaker arranges the material.

After Chen Wangdao, many scholars have probed the problem of context, and Wang Dechun is one of them. He preferred "utterance context" to "language context", and divided context into two major types, subjective and objective ones. Context is the environment formed by both the objective factors such as time, place, field, and addressee, and the subjective factors such as the identity, mentality, character, profession, and mood of the addresser.

In 1982, People's Education Press published the book *Modern Chinese*

edited by Zhang Zhigong. The book divides context into actual context, social-temporal context and personal idiolect.

As each language has its specific features and the contexts of the source and target languages are quite different, therefore, the transmitting skills between any two languages in question are unique. As for this thesis, it will focus on the roles context plays in translating from English to Chinese. Since different schools have different theories and ways of classifying kinds of contexts, this thesis will use context in its following concepts:

1. Linguistic context: the language units that precede and/or follow a word or passage and clarify its meaning, including the immediate linguistic context and remote linguistic context;
2. Situational context
  - 2.1. the immediate situational context: the circumstances under which the event happens at the moment
  - 2.2 socio-cultural context: the background setting—including social and cultural ones relevant to the text
  - 2.3 pragmatic context: the participant's intention of the utterance
3. Personal idiolect: the author's education, experience, language style, value judgment, etc.
4. Context of the target language text: the linguistic and cultural norms of the target language on the basis of which the target text is checked, and the cultural and educational reality of the target readers.

## Chapter Two

### Context in Understanding the Source Text

Translation is a message transmitting process, in which meaning is the center of study. Since context is the inextricable factor in determining meaning at various dimensions, many great figures involved in translation have long realized the importance of context in their works. Firth said, “each word is a new word in a new context”; Peter Newmark explained, “A common mistake is to ignore context. A not uncommon mistake is to make context the excuse for inaccurate translation.” There are also other popular sayings like “No context, no text” or “You know a word by the company it keeps”.

#### I Context and meaning

##### 1. Kinds of meaning

When we mention *meaning*, most of us will think of meanings given in a dictionary. But in actual language use, meaning is variable and can only be realized at different levels of language with the help of the context in which it appears.

The traditional approach of meaning analysis represented by Fries makes a distinction between “lexical” and “structural” meaning. The former is expressed by such “meaningful” parts of speech as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs indicated in the dictionary associated with the grammar. The latter expresses the distinction between the subject and the object of a sentence, oppositions of definiteness, tense and number, and the difference between statements, questions and requests. In a word,

“the total linguistic meaning of any utterance consists of the lexical meanings of the separate words plus such structural meanings...”

Using the functional approach, Leech categorized *meaning* in seven kinds, five of which being under the associative meaning:

1. Conceptual meaning, which carries the logical, cognitive, or denotative content (the relationship between the reference and the physical existence or experience).

2. Associative meaning

2.1. Connotative meaning: what is communicated by virtue of what language refers to, that is, idea which a word makes one think of in addition to the main meaning. For example, for the Americans, the word *turkey* denotes a particular kind of bird, but it connotes a particular festival.

2.2. Stylistic meaning: what is communicated of the social circumstances of language use. For instance, *cast* is associated with literary style while *chuck* with a colloquial one.

2.3. Affective meaning: what is communicated of the feelings and attitudes of the speaker/writer. *Shut up* indicates a disrespectful attitude on the part of the speaker.

2.4. Reflected meaning: what is communicated through association with another sense of the same expression. Our response to one sense of a word maybe affected by another sense of the word. For example, we scarcely use the word *gay* in its older sense of *merry* as it may now invoke homosexuality.

2.5. Collocative meaning: what is communicated through association with words that tend to occur in the environment of another

word. A word may have a collocative meaning if it is used together with certain words but not with others. Collocation may be so restrictive that we can guess which word will follow a given word. For example, in reading the sentence “She has blond...” we expect that the word *hair* to appear.

3. Thematic meaning: what is communicated by the way in which the message is organized in terms of order and emphasis.

When concepts are combined together to convey a message, their conceptual meanings become interdependent and interacting, the result of which can cause ambiguity and vagueness, and sometimes may even change the meaning of a word by adding new sense or decreasing its existing sense. For example, *fox* refers to an animal by itself, but when it appears with other words, its conceptual meaning gives way to the new associative meaning in Sentence 2 or changes its function in Sentence 3.

1. It is a fox.
2. He is a fox.
3. She will fox him.

By affective meaning, Leech meant, “language, from the perspective of the speaker, can express his attitude and emotion; from the perspective of the hearer can control or influence the behavior and attitude of the hearer.” For example:

The average shooting star... is a small fragment of matter usually smaller than a pea and often *no larger than* a grain of sand.

译文：普通流星...是物质的小碎片，通常比豌豆还小，常常跟沙粒一样大。

When we say “A is not larger than B”, we are speaking of the fact, and

when we say, “A is no larger than B”, we have shown our attitude to it.

Then the new approach—pragmatic approach as distinct from the traditional semantic approach—is adopted in studying kinds of meaning, which explores a new dimension of meaning. Generally speaking, semantics concentrates on meaning that comes from linguistic knowledge, while pragmatics concentrates on the aspect of meaning involving not only the linguistic knowledge but also the knowledge of the physical and social world. In a sense, pragmatics studies how contextual features determine or influence the interpretation of utterances. For instance, the sentence “It’s cold here” semantically means the temperature of a certain place is low. But if seen from pragmatic meaning, it might be used as a suggestion to close the window or door, or, a suggestion to switch on the air-conditioner, or to move to a warmer place. Obviously the pragmatic meaning does not exist in the language itself, but depends on the context in which the sentence is uttered. Therefore, it is not strange for Paul Ziff to say, “if I utter ‘I waited for you’, then depending on the context I may be making a statement, or giving an explanation, or offering a reason, or making an accusation, or making complaint, or quoting, or reciting a poem, or telling a story, and so forth”.

## II Functions of context in determining meaning

Context plays an important role in determining the meaning of the source text. Generally speaking, it functions in six main aspects.

### 1. It eliminates ambiguity

There are two kinds of ambiguities: lexical and syntactical ones. Most words in English are polysemous, and the exact meaning of a word can

only be determined by virtue of the context in which it appears. Take the sentence “Pass the glass of port” for example. *Pass*, *glass* and *port* are all polysemous, but in the context of this sentence, the potential ambiguities are ruled out, and the meaning is, if translated into Chinese: “把那杯葡萄酒递过来。”

As for syntactic ambiguities, in some cases the context is the only key to the problem. For example, in the sentence “The boy saw a man with a telescope.” Syntactically, two interpretations exist, for the telescope can be occupied by the boy or by the man. Only with the help of the linguistic context or the situational context indicated by the sentences preceding and/or following it can we make sure who is holding the telescope.

## 2. Context can remove vagueness

The meaning of a generic term is usually blur-edged, and can only be clarified by the context in which it occurs. For instance, the meaning of “good” varies in different context. When we say, “This is a good strawberry”, *good* means *sweet*; when we say “this is a good lemon”, then *good* means *sour*. If the sentence “The price is good” is uttered by a customer, it means the price is low, and if by a seller, it means the price is high.

## 3. Context helps indicate referents

Pronouns like *he*, *she*, *it* are used to substitute for nouns and noun phrases, and adverbs like *then*, *there* are used for time and place to avoid repetition. But substitution may confuse the reader by what it indicates. The famous linguist Firth once made up a dialogue:  
“Do you think he will?”

“I don’t know. He might.”

“I suppose he ought to, but perhaps he feels he can’t.”

“Well, his brothers have. They perhaps think he needn’t.”

“Perhaps eventually he may. I think he should, and I very much hope he will.”

Without context, it is hard to guess whom and what they are talking about. In fact, the event omitted after “well”, “might”, “ought to” is “join the army”.

#### 4. Context may supply information omitted through ellipsis

Brevity and simplicity are the basic rules in writing. Therefore, an author usually omits the commonly shared background knowledge, whether linguistic, cultural, or situational. For example, in the sentence “He drinks too much”, the object *liquor* is omitted. In Chinese we render it into: 他酒喝得太多。 An American banker might say to his client, “For this sort of certificate of deposit, the minimum is fifty”. Here 50 is not 50 dollars, but fifty-thousand dollars. If someone tells you that “This car will cost eight five”, the meaning is “eight-thousand, five-hundred”. In these cases, it depends upon the addressee’s background knowledge of the relative cost or value of such items to understand the meaning. Or he might be confused or misinterpret it. Thus in understanding the source text, a translator should acquire the appropriate and sufficient background information in case it is not shown in the text.

#### 5. Context in understanding pragmatic meaning

To understand the pragmatic meaning of the source text, the translator in most cases has to resort to the situational context. Two little stories may imply the importance of pragmatic meaning:

Story 1:

A little boy comes in the front door.

Mother: Wipe your feet, please.

He removes his muddy shoes and socks and carefully wipes his clean feet on the doormat.

Story 2:

A father is trying to get his 3-year-old daughter to stop lifting up her dress to display her new underwear to the assembled guests.

Father: We don't Do that.

Daughter: I KNOW, Daddy. You don't WEAR dresses.

The children's knowledge of vocabulary and grammar does not seem to be the problem. The problem is that they seem to have understood what the words meant but not what their parents meant.

The sentence "Whose car is it?" is semantically clear in meaning, but pragmatically, it has several possible interpretations. If it is uttered by a policeman, it might mean that the car is parked in a wrong place; or it may express the complaint that the car stands in the way; or it may imply someone's jealousy of such a brand new car...

6. Personal idiolect and understanding of literary works

Idiolect belongs to the subjective context. It indicates the habitual form of language used by an individual. In understanding the source text, especially the literary one, the translator must be aware of the unique features of the author's language, for novelists and poets are very imaginative and original in language, and their use of words is not only in their usual meaning familiar to the community, but also in the occasional meaning endowed to the word by the author. Their playing on

words sometimes enriches the word's senses, but might as well bring difficulty to one's understanding of the text even to a native reader. For example, for the same word "rose", Shakespeare compares it to a perfect person (Th' expectancy and rose of the fair state); Burns compares it to his love (O My Luve's like a red, red rose); Yeats uses it to symbolize beauty (The Rose of the World); and Emily Dickinson to represent life and vitality. Therefore, we have to study and experience the author's personal idiolect to understand what the words mean. Take one of Emily Dickinson's poems for example:

Essential Oils are wrung-  
The attar from the Rose  
Be not expressed by Suns- alone-  
It is the gift of Screws-  
The General Rose- decay-  
But this – in Lady's Drawer  
Make Summer – When the Lady lie  
In Ceaseless Rosemary—

There is no hard word in the poem, yet the meanings of the words such as "Essential Oils," "the Rose," "Summer" "Ceaseless Rosemary" can only be found in Dickinson's "private dictionary" and her own style of creating new dimensions of meaning to words. Sometimes in order to understand one poem of a poet, one has to have an understanding of the poet's entire works, even his or her life experience.

#### 6. Context provides clues for stylistic usage of language

The same meaning can be expressed differently in different situations. For example, the following five sentences are basically the same in

meaning, but different in style:

- 1) The guests may now proceed to the banquet room.
- 2) Dinner is now being served.
- 3) Let us go in and eat.
- 4) Let's eat.
- 5) Soup's on.

The level of formality decreases one by one.

When doing E-C translation, we should also consider the style of the text to ensure that the renderings conform to the source text stylistically, just as Nida concluded that translation was to choose the most suitable rendering in both meaning and style. Without a style that equates to the source text, the rendering will remain unfinished or poorly finished. For example, the English sentence below may be translated in different ways:

I can help him if you won't.

T1: 我可以帮助他, 如果你不愿意帮助他的话。

T2: 如果你不愿意帮助他的话, 我可以帮助他。

T3: 你不帮他, 我帮。

By the context of this sentence and the entire text, we may choose the translation that can fit into the style of the entire text.

Another example:

True eccentrics never deliberately set out to draw attention to themselves. They *disregard social conventions* without being conscious that they are doing anything extraordinary. This invariably wins them the love and respect of others...

Someone's translation is:

真正的怪人从不有意做些什么怪事来引人注目。他们玩世不恭,

却并未意识到自己的所作所为与众不同。他们因此总是赢得尊敬和爱慕...

Here the rendering shows the using of 玩世不恭 is contradictory to the style of the whole text, and should better be rendered as 无视社会习俗.

In some instances, we can prove the importance of context from a negative perspective, that is, to see the result when context is neglected. The examples here will illustrate the situation when the renderings should be adjusted. Otherwise they will contradict with the author's meaning.

“riot police” means anti-riot police, and should be rendered into: 防暴警察 and “crisis law”: 反危机法案

On the front page of China Daily, Jan.16, 1995, there is an article entitled “Inflation is target of bank's new policy” and here inflation actually means anti-inflation, in Chinese 制止通胀政策

Another example:

Sidney Simon called the college grading system “archaic, prescientific, bureaucratic invention,” and “about as *accurate* as police estimates of crowds in peace marches.”

Someone translates the passage as:

西德尼·西蒙称这种大学评级制度“过时无用，缺乏科学验证的，还是官僚主义的产物”，而且“简直同警察估计和平示威人数一样准确。” If we read the text carefully, we may find the rendering accurate contradicts with the context, and in fact, *accurate* here means 不准确, and has a sense of sarcasm.

### III Context and grammatical analysis

Grammatical analysis is a very important tool in understanding the source text, but sometimes the same grammatical structure may be interpreted differently. For example, the same structure “A of B” may express various meanings in different contexts:

- a) the force of habit B exerts A
- b) the acquisition of money B is the goal of A
- c) the city of Tianjin it indicates relationship: B is A
- d) a city of industry and trade B characterizes A
- e) the woman of the house A manages B
- f) a woman of the street A is associated with B (the euphemism for prostitute)

In such cases as grammatical analysis fails to clarify the meaning, context can be used to help solve the problem. The following are some examples of syntactic ambiguity and how context can help understand the meaning.

- 1) The son of Pharaoh’s daughter was the daughter of Pharaoh’s son.

One possible interpretation of the sentence is: 法老女儿的儿子是法老儿子的女儿, which is grammatically correct but obviously a nonsense sentence. When we explain it in another way, and consider *the son of Pharaoh* as a unit, then the meaning will be transparent.

- 2) There was a massive vote--345 to 12—in the House of Representatives last night for amendments to the McMahon Act which will enable the United States to provide Britain and, to some extent, other allies with *far less restricted information* about its most recent advances in the development of atomic weapons.

In this sentence, “far less” may modify “restricted” or “restricted

information". One translator renders it into: 美国通过法案以后, 给英国及其他盟国的有关发展原子武器的机密资料更少了, which is contrary to the writer's intention, and contrary to our background knowledge of the time when the event happened—the socio-cultural context. One possible rendering can be: 昨天夜里众议院以 345 对 12 的压倒票数表决通过修改麦克马洪法案。该法案修改后将使美国对英国及其他盟国提供最先进的原子武器技术的限制大大放宽。

3) After all this life in the rough country towns would seem ghastly.

This sentence may be read in several ways:

- a) *After all this life in the rough country towns would seem ghastly.*
- b) *After all this life in the rough country towns would seem ghastly.*
- c) *After all this life in the rough country towns would seem ghastly.*

Each one is grammatically correct, and what the author means can only be inferred from the context. But here the necessary context is not given by the sentence, and the translator has to find it elsewhere in the text. It is true that the context might be a very remote one, or it may not be given directly in the text, therefore the translator must have an understanding of the whole text.

The sentences listed below are titles of newspaper articles, which may have more than one possible interpretations, and they are examples to show how the socio-cultural context of the source language is needed.

- 1) Retired priest may marry Bruce Springsteen.
- 2) Crowds rushing to see Pope trample 6 to death.
- 3) You can combat that feeling of helplessness with illegal drugs

The first sentence may possibly mean

- a) A retired priest may perform Bruce Springsteen's marriage

ceremony. Or:

- b) A retired priest may become the spouse of Bruce Springsteen.

The ambiguity here is a lexical one that arises from the multiple senses of the verb *to marry*, one is “to take as one’s wife or husband in marriage”, another: “(of a priest etc.) join (persons in marriage)”( (牧师等) 为…证婚, 为…主持婚礼). The socio-cultural context helps us to interpret the sentence by adopting the second meaning of the word, and leads us to a sound interpretation of the sentence. For priest is a man, and Bruce is also a man, they cannot marry each other.

For the second sentence, it could mean

- a) Six are trampled to death by crowds rushing to see the Pope, or
- b) The crowds are rushing to see the Pope trample six to death.

Or maybe here six does not refer to people at all.

In the third sentence, it could mean

- a) With illegal drugs, you can combat that feeling; or
- b) That feeling of helplessness with illegal drugs can be combated.

In this case, the ambiguity does not come from the multiple senses of a word, but from two alternative interpretations of the grammatical structure. This time, our knowledge of the view of the society on illegal drugs leads us to expect that a newspaper would probably have intended the second interpretation.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Context and Target Language Text**

#### **I The importance of target readers' response**

Understanding the source text is only the first step in the translating process. According to Nida's diagram, the adequate and effective understanding of the source text has only finished the process of the translator's assumption of R1, but the purpose of translation is to reproduce in the receptor language the most natural and closest text both in meaning and in style to the source text, and to arouse a similar response in the receptor language readers as the source text does to the source readers. To fulfill the task of translation, it involves the translator's mastery of the target language, including grammar, collocation, usage, culture and social norms, and the differences between two languages at various levels and aspects. Both aspects of knowledge prepare the way for the end product to be accepted by its reader. Therefore a translated work must be checked not only by the target language grammar, usage, but also by its readers, which is more important. For a translator, the difficulty of the first step lies in that the target grammar and usage are opaque to him, and the difficulty of the latter step is that the author can only assume himself as one of the readers and anticipate their response. In short, the linguistic and situational contexts of the target language are opaque, and that is why some scholars of translation call the activity "re-creation". The importance of the receptor language context and receptor language reader's response lies in that:

Firstly, the purpose of translation is to spread the information of the source text to a wider audience—people of another language group. Therefore, the response of the audience is vital in evaluating the translated work. If the receptors of a translation are confused and wrongly interpret the text or find it so difficult as to give up reading it, then clearly the translation is a failure. If the translation is a success, then the translated work will gain new life among the receptor language readers and become part of their literature and culture. For example, Shakespeare's nationality is not so important, he belongs to the whole world, for his fame and writings have crossed various cultures and have gained new life everywhere they arrive through translation. The philosophy and wisdom of Shakespeare's writing have nourished Chinese, Japanese, French and many other non-English peoples over the world just as they have nourished English people.

Secondly, the receptor language readers are the most appropriate people to check the readability and acceptability of the text. Wilson's comments in an unpublished manuscript on the differences between an old and a revised version of the Bible in Dagbani described the target reader's response to the unnaturalness of rendering caused by incoherence:

For a native speaker it was difficult to explain what was wrong with the earlier version, except that it was "foreign". Since superficially there seemed to be no obvious grammatical blunders and the vocabulary was not obviously faulty, the ingredients of this foreignness were not at first apparent. Now, however, a comparison...has made clear that what the older version mainly suffered from is considerable deficiencies in

“discourse structure”, i.e., in the way the sentences are combined into well-integrated paragraphs, and these in turn into a well-constructed whole. The new version, on the contrary, shows native speaker’s mastery over the means of signposting the text into a coherent, clear prose, which is...a real pleasure to read.

The above comments show that it is much more straightforward to decide what constitutes a grammatical or acceptable sentence than what constitutes a grammatical or acceptable sentence sequence, paragraph, text, or discourse.

The following is an example showing how foreignness may spoil the reader’s appetite:

ST: “ That, Sir, I find, is what a very great many of your countrymen cannot help.”

T1: “ 我觉得这正是你们国家的许多人所认为是没有办法的事。”

T2: “ 先生，我认为这正是许多贵同乡所没有办法避免的事。”

The second rendering is better, for it sounds more Chinese.

## II The mentality and the cultural reality of the target readers

There are two important aspects of the target language context, one is the target readers’ different way of reporting the events and their experiences in the world from the source readers, the other is the cultural reality of the target readers. The mastery of the different mentalities between the source and target readers helps a translator to keep from the interference of the source text and readjust the rendering accordingly; and the understanding of the target readers’ cultural reality prepares a translator to deal with the gaps by flexible translating methods.

The following example explains how the experienced translators of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century dealt with the socio-cultural reality of the target language readers. Most Chinese students know how Lu Xun translated the terms “democracy” and “science” when they were first introduced to Chinese people: 德先生 and 赛先生. At that time, it was very hard for ordinary Chinese people, even the intellectuals, to understand what they really meant, and Lu Xun’s translation seemed very personal, besides, the Chinese characters “德” and “赛” implied that they were something progressive and good. As time passed by and when most people understood what the terms referred to, translators gave formal and accurate names to them: 民主, 科学, the concepts of which were accepted by the Chinese people and became part of our social life and culture.

The other important aspect of the target language contexts is the different mentalities between two peoples in question. In Chinese, in order to show our politeness, we say 您先请!, while in English, the common saying is “*After you!*”. Chinese and English have different temporal coordinates to express the priority of time. In English, *back* refers to the time in the past, while *forward* indicates future. But in Chinese, the situation is up-side-down. 前 indicates past and 后 future (前无古人, 后无来者). It is a pitfall for some translators:

- 1) In measuring *forward* from a point of time in the past, only the following construction is normal...

T1: 要从过去某一点时间向前衡量时只有下面的结构才是常用的。

T2: 当从过去某一点时间向后算起时, 只有下面的结构才是常用的。

T2 is the correct rendering.

2) The verbs in hypothetical conditional clauses are *backshifted*, the past tense form being used for present and future time reference and the past perfect form for past time reference.

假设条件分句中的动词是向前移的，过去时形式用来指现在和将来的时间，过去完成体形式用来指过去时间。

The difference in mentality between English and Chinese peoples proves itself in many other occasions. In English “a five percent discount” is 九五折 in Chinese;

*Suicide bomber* 肉弹 或自杀性爆炸行为;

One way only—此巷不通;

Wheel—残疾人专用通道;

Staff only— 闲人免进.

If we translate the above sentences or phrases literally into Chinese, then the Chinese people will be confused, for the literal translations are not in accordance with the Chinese context.

As for the differences between the two languages and how the renderings should be in accordance with the Chinese context, they will be further discussed in Chapter Four.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Major Problems Relating to Context in Translating from English to Chinese**

According to Nida, communication can be divided into three kinds: communication with people of the in-group; communication with people of the out-group; and communication involving specialized information, which comes from the world culture. English is one of the most important languages in international communication. According to the TV series “The Story of English (1986)” produced by BBC, about 350 million of the world’s population use English as their mother tongue; and nearly 1 billion use English in commercial and cultural exchange. We can find people speaking English in every continent around the world; three-fourths of the world’s email, telegram and fax are written in English (excluding the emails and e-business letters translated from English). One half of the magazines on science are published in English; and in the field of computer, 80 percent of the information is written in English. In a word, English is becoming the world language—on the one hand, it is playing more and more important roles in world politics, economics, and cultural exchanges; on the other hand, it is not only the mother tongue of the English speaking countries but also the second language or official language of many other countries and areas. With the increasing speed of globalization, especially China’s entering into WTO, China has become a regular member of the world economy. Under this circumstance, it is crucial for translators to produce quality translation to speed up the process of modernization.

This chapter will discuss some major problems a translator may encounter in translating from English to Chinese at various language levels and aspects and how context helps solve the problems.

### I No word-for-word equivalence

When we begin to learn English, we are likely to establish a kind of one-to-one equivalence between an English term and a Chinese interpretation, such as “man = 人”, and the textbooks for beginners usually provide very limited context where such one-to-one equivalence makes sense. But in real language cases, the situations are rather complicated, and *man* has far more chances to be translated into terms other than 人. Like some people conclude, “you know a word by the company it keeps”, *man* equates to different Chinese words in different contexts. The following are the examples of how *man* is used in the actual language context.

- a) man’s power to alter the nature of his world: man refers to human beings
- b) men and women: men refer to people of male gender
- c) men and boys: men means male adults
- d) officers and men: men refer to soldiers
- e) man and wife: man refers to husband
- f) the chessboard and men: men refer to pieces in chess game

The multiple-sense of a word is one of the reasons why there is little chance for one-to-one equivalence between two languages. “When” is a frequently used term, and many students equates it to 当…的时候, and translate it in that way every time they see it. In fact, according to the definition of OALD (*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*), it can be

used as an interrogative adverb, meaning: at what time; on what occasion. It can also function as relation adverb. Look at the following sentences and their Chinese renderings:

Sunday is the day when very few people go to work. 星期天没什么人去上班。

There are times when I wonder why I do this job. 有时候我也不明白我为什么要做这个工作。

How can they learn anything when they spend all their spare time watching television?

他们把所有的空闲时间都用来看电视了，还能学什么东西呢？

In these cases, “when” is translated differently according to the linguistic context in which it appears.

In studying English, sometimes we habitually try to find the central meaning of a word, and establish word for word equivalence on that basis; and in translating, we are used to applying the central meaning into the text without considering the context, and making mistakes when the author adopts a meaning less frequently used. For instance:

Example 1:

Whatever the fault may lie, the fact remains that it is *the theatre* at Oxford and not at Cambridge which is on the verge of extinction...

Rendering: 暂且不论责任在哪一方，事实仍然是，在牛津的，而不是在剑桥的，剧院几乎已濒临绝境的边缘。

Theatre here is not 剧院. When consulting a dictionary, we get to know that theatre sometimes means “room or hall for lectures, etc with seats in rows rising one behind another” (阶梯教室). Considering the context of the article, we will be clear that what concerns the author is

how the academic atmosphere has been violated by motor industry. Therefore, *theatre* here should be translated into 学术气氛 instead of 剧院。

#### Example 2:

But the significant thing is not the behavior of the players but the attitude of the spectators; and behind the spectators, of the nations who work themselves into furies over these absurd contests, and seriously believe—at any rate for short periods—that running, jumping and kicking a ball are tests of national *virtue*.

Chinese rendering: 但主要的不是运动员的行为，而是观众的态度，以及在观众后面的对这些可笑的比赛如痴如狂的各国民众的态度，他们笃信——至少在短时间内——跑、跳和踢球都是对国家美德的检验。“*Virtue*” in this sentence means 力量(effective force or power) instead of 美德。

The difficulty of finding the equivalence between English and Chinese at lexical level may occur in situations when English word and Chinese word overlap in meaning. To understand fully the question, we need to look at how people use words to express the physical world and their experience in it. Millions of different objects and events exist in the universe, but language uses only several thousand symbols to express them. Therefore, to have a separate word for every distinct object and experience would be impossible. Since different language groups differ considerably in ways of segmenting or dividing up the phenomenal world, objects and experiences are classified in many different ways.

Numbers are considered to be among the phenomena in the world that have the invariable equivalence, yet English and Chinese have different

ways in dividing numbers:

Numbers in the physical world: 1 0000 0000 0000

Chinese: 兆 亿 万

Numbers in the physical world: 1 000 000 000 000

English: trillion billion million thousand

Chinese divides numbers by every four digits, and English three.

Examples of overlapping of meaning between two languages:

*Old*: old clothes—旧衣服; an old man—一位老人

But 牛排老了 in English is “The steak is *tough*”, while tough in the phrase ‘a *tough* battle’ is translated into 一场硬仗。

One definition of the word *send* in OALD is, cause something/somebody to go or be taken *without going oneself*. For example: His mother sent him to the shop to get some bread. 他母亲让他去商店买些面包(His mother did not go). While in Chinese, 送 also involves going to the place oneself. The sentence “我送你去机场” is expressed in English as: I'll *see you off* at the airport. “我送孩子们上幼儿园”; I'll *take the children to* the kindergarten. “我送你回家” ; I'll *escort* you home.

*Soft* is frequently translated into Chinese 软, referring to a substance or material lacking hardness or firmness; yielding to pressure. In this sense, *soft* and 软 express the same concept. But *soft* in English has some other senses of meaning the Chinese word 软 does not have: when referring to light or color, *soft* means “not bright or glaring”, in Chinese (指光线、色彩等)柔和的, 不耀眼的, for example: a *soft* pink rather than a harsh red 柔和的粉红而不是刺眼的火红; and *soft* means “quiet and subdued; not loud” when referring to sound, in Chinese:(指声音)轻

柔的, 低声的. Similarly, some senses the Chinese word 软 carries are not included in the English word *soft*, for instance: 你的心太软。

沙发 is a borrowed word from English *Sofa*, but they have different meanings. *Sofa* in English refers to “a long upholstered seat with a back and arms, for two or more people”, in Chinese: 长沙发。But in Chinese, 沙发 also includes the upholstered seat with a back and arms for one person, which in English is “armchair”.

Language changes synchronically and diachronically, the meaning of a word may change dramatically over time. That is another reason why no simple one-to-one equivalence exists between two languages. In these cases, the socio-cultural context concerning time when the event happens or the text is written provides clues for a sound and accurate understanding of the text. Here are two examples from two Chinese versions of *Wuthering Heights*, which show that if we do not take into consideration the social settings of the text, even experienced translators may make mistakes.

Example 1: “Ellen, shut the window. I’m starving! ”

Version 1: “爱伦, 把窗子关上。我快饿死了!”

Version 2: “艾伦, 关上窗户。我都要冻死了! ”

According to the context, the second version is the correct one. The sentence *shut the window* has given situational clues to the meaning of the word. If one is conscious of the context, he will resort to the dictionary and find a definition under the entry ‘starve’ in COD (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*): (archaic or dial) perish with or suffer from cold. This meaning is rarely used, but as the novel is not a modern one, and the time when the story happened helps us to distinguish the right definition from

others.

Another example “Are there no *boys* at the farm?”

Version 1: 难道农庄上没有孩子吗?

Version 2: 庄上没男孩子吗?

In fact, “boy” in this sentence refers to ‘male servant’, a meaning rarely used now. The correct rendering should be :农庄上没有仆人吗?

Social context sometimes cannot be found in the text, then it is the translator’s responsibility to find it elsewhere. For example, at the early stage of World War II, there was a famous saying by Churchill: “Some chicken, Some neck!” It is very hard to understand what Churchill meant if we do not have the background knowledge concerning it. In fact, it was a reply to Hitler’s crazy talking: “In three weeks England will have her neck wrung like a chicken.” Then the sentence can be translated into: “难对付的小鸡，难对付的脖子啊！”

Liang Shiqiu once talked about his experience of translating Shakespeare’s works, and concluded that, though Shakespeare’s works were written in modern English, the meaning of some words varied sharply from the current English. Some words had the same form with the current ones, but were quite different in meaning. He listed some words used by Shakespeare, whose meanings are not at all familiar to us: *Acre* sometimes means *furlong* (弗隆), about 220 yards instead of *mu*(亩);

*Neat* is sometimes used as a noun, meaning *ox* instead of *tidiness* (整整齐齐);

*Doubt* often means *fear* (恐惧) instead;

*Speak* sometimes means *battle* (战斗);

*Flag: calamus* (菖蒲) instead;

*Worm: snake* (蛇) instead;

*Pledge* sometimes means *to toast* (举杯祝饮), not *to swear* (发誓赌咒);

*Will* sometimes means *lust* (贪婪) and not *willpower* (意志);

*Port* sometimes means *city gate* (城门口) instead of *dock* (港口);

*In blood* equates to *in perfect health* (身体康健) instead.

Since most dictionaries do not provide us with the information of how the meanings of a word develop through time, the translator must be responsible for choosing the dictionary that covers the kind of information needed, and choose the right meaning according to the context.

Another reason why lexical equivalence is hard to find is that some Chinese interpretations given by a bilingual dictionary provide insufficient or even false information of some very culture-specific words, especially of its emotive or expressive meanings. For example:

1) *naughty*≠*淘气*

Once in a free talk, a student commented kindly that the foreign teacher's daughter was "naughty". The mother was very unhappy and refuted quickly that "No, she's not naughty at all, she's cute and lively."

Chinese word *淘气* has a wider range of usage, and when used by Chinese adults to talk about children, it might be neutral or sometimes well intentioned. But in English, it is in most cases derogatory. According to COD, it means *(esp. of children) disobedient; badly behaved*, according to OALD, *(used by adults*

*when talking to or about children) disobedient; bad; causing trouble.*

While in *A New English-Chinese Dictionary* “*naughty*” is rendered into 顽皮的, 淘气的, 不听话的, and the information about usage is not provided. (*The English and Chinese Dictionary* edited by Lu Gusun gives a brief note about the derogatory sense of the word).

## 2) Propaganda ≠ 宣传

*Propaganda* in English has two major meanings: a. Publicity that is intended to spread ideas or information which will persuade or convince people; b. (derog) ideas or statements that are intended as publicity for a particular (political) cause but are (often) presented as being unbiased(OALD). But *A New English-Chinese Dictionary* interprets it as: 1.宣传机构, 宣传组织; 2. 系统或有组织进行的宣传: *do propaganda among the masses* 宣传群众, 在群众中作宣传工作, and the derogatory sense of the word when used in politics is not mentioned at all! Sometimes it may arouse misunderstanding when a translator renders Chinese 宣传 into English *Propaganda* without taking the context into account. In fact, in some cases the Chinese term 宣传 may be translated as *publicity* in English. And *publicity* means “(business of) providing information in order to attract public attention; advertising”.

## 3) Colors in English and Chinese carry different emotive meanings:

In English, ‘blue’ is sometimes interpreted as “indecent, pornographic”—a blue movie or joke; while *yellow* means “(of newspapers etc.) that deliberately include sensational news items, etc., in order to attract readers. 低级报刊, 故作耸人听闻的报道以哗众取宠。” But in Chinese, 黄色 is related to indecent, pornographic, for example, 黄色录像带, 黄色书刊, 扫黄打非。

4) *Individualism* is another term whose translation in Chinese has a different emotive meaning from that of English. In English, *individualism* has three meanings: a) the habit or principle of being independent and self-reliant (It is the meaning that is most frequently used, but not included in some Chinese dictionaries); b) a social theory favoring the free action of individuals; c) self-centered feeling or conduct; egoism. While in Chinese, it is translated into 个人主义, 利己主义, which is usually used derogatorily, and some people even associate it with selfishness.

These terms are highly culture-specific. In order to understand the terms accurately, one should accumulate some knowledge of Western culture by resorting to other sources of references besides looking up in an authoritative monolingual dictionary.

As English is the mother tongue of both the Englishmen and the Americans as well as of other peoples, one has to be careful of the register, e.g. whom one is talking with. A true story that happened last year is an example. Before the May Day, the foreign teachers were told that the holiday was from May 1 to 7. Being an American, a teacher thought that she must go back teaching on the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup>. On the 7<sup>th</sup>, she got up early and came to the classroom as usual, but couldn't enter the classroom—not even the building—it was locked! After hearing the story, I consulted a dictionary and found that for North Americans, “Monday to Friday” means only a four-day holiday, and “Monday through Friday” means a five-day holiday.

When one learns a word in a certain context, he should bear in mind that he is learning “a” definition instead of “the definition” of the word,

other definitions await him somewhere else in other texts of reading. Fu Lei, a great man of letter and translation, said that a definition of a word given by a dictionary was sometimes like the molecular form  $H_2O$ , and only when the word is used in a sentence and a paragraph does it become “water” and gain life.

## II Context in translating phrases (collocations, set phrases and idioms)

A word is the primary and the smallest meaning unit that rarely occurs on its own; it almost always occurs in the company of other units, that is why its meaning should be checked by larger meaningful units—phrase, clause, sentence, and discourse.

Collocation is the tendency of certain words to co-occur regularly in a given language. The collocation of a particular word is related to their conceptual meanings, for example, *check* is expected and is more likely to occur with *bank*, *pay*, *money* and *write* than *repair*, *moon* or *river*. However, the seemingly correct or logical patterning based on the conceptual meanings of a word in some cases cannot be put into the actual language use. For example, *carry out*, *undertake* or even *perform* seem to bear the same meaning if collocated with *visit*. Yet English speakers typically *pay* a visit, less typically *make* a visit, and are unlikely to *perform* a visit. Both *rancid* and *addled* mean ‘stale/rotten’, but *addled* eggs and *rancid butter* are the way they collocate. This suggests that the patterns of collocation of a language are quite arbitrary, which reflects how differently each communication group describes the relationship between things and events, and thus causing the specialities of language and culture.

In understanding the collocations in an English text, one must be aware of the context in which some active words (words that have a vast collocation range) appear, and distinguish its different senses when it collocates with different words. *Run* has a vast collocation range, and some of its typical collocations being *company, business, show, car, stockings, tights, nose, wild, debt, bill, river, course, water and color* among others. And what a word means often depends on its association with certain collocation. It is easy if the meaning of the whole can be determined by adding up the meanings of the parts (which is true in most cases of collocation). Problems often arise when the meaning of the collocation is not the meaning of the sum total of the parts. For instance, *run a car* does not mean to “drive a car”, but “to own, use and be able to maintain a car”. The first step is to recognize that the meaning of a collocation is not to sum up the literal meanings of its individual elements, the other step is how to translate it into a Chinese counterpart that will conform to the Chinese usage and the context of Chinese text. For example: English people say “*make a promise*”, but Chinese people say 承诺, 许下诺言; *break(or violate) the law* in English is 违反法律(而不是“打破法律”) in Chinese. See the following sentence:

The first of these is the application of the machines, products and systems of applied knowledge that scientists and technologists develop.

Rendering 1: 其中首先是对科学家和工程师所发明的机器、产品和应用知识体系得到应用。

Rendering 2: 第一个方面是对科学家和技术专家所发明的机器和产品以及他们所建立的应用科学知识体系的应用。

Rendering 2 is the way how the Chinese verbs collocate with the objects,

for in Chinese “发明的”和“研制成功的”都不能与知识体系搭配。

Idioms and set phrases are frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and, in the case of idioms, often carry meanings which cannot be obtained by adding up their individual components. *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English* defines an idiom as “a combination of two or more words that function as a unit of meaning”. In other words, the meaning of a set phrase or proverb or idiom is more than the sum-up of the words’ meanings, and should be taken as one unit to establish meaning. One character of these phrases is that they allow no variation in form; for instance, we should not say of a friend that he had difficulty in *making up his thoughts*, but *his mind*. In “hit the nail on the head”, we should not substitute *strike* for *hit* unless we were thinking literally of his skill with the hammer rather than figuratively of his inability to say precisely what he meant.

The main problems that idiomatic and set phrases pose in translation involve two aspects: the sensibility to recognize an idiom and interpret it correctly; and the difficulties involved in rendering the various aspects of meaning when an idiom or a set phrase is conveyed into the target language. The context consciousness in both source and target texts can shed light on our translation of idioms.

There are some easily recognizable idioms and expressions that violate truth, and sound nonsense when we understand it word by word, such as “It’s raining cats and dogs”, “jump down someone’s throat”, “food for thought”; expressions which do not follow the logic or grammatical rules of the language, for example, *by and large, blow someone to kingdom come, put paid to*; and idioms which have simile-like structures. But

sometimes it is hard to recognize an idiom if one does not consider the context carefully. Look at the dialogue below:

“Will you at least let me know when your cousin arrives?” Lord Warburton asked.

“Only on the condition I’ve mentioned—that you don’t fall in love with her!” Mr Touchett replied.

“*That strikes me as hard*. Don’t you think me good enough?...”

somebody puts the italicized part as: 这对我的打击不小, ...

*Strike* in the sentence does not mean “hit”, and “strike...as” equates to “impress...as”. *Hard* does not mean “with great force”, but is used as adjective meaning “difficult”. Thus the Chinese rendering might be: 这我可难办到。你认为我配不上她吗?

Example 2 ( from *Wuthering Height*):

“... and rousing myself to dispel the obtrusive name”

Rendering 1: 我惊跳起来, 想驱散这突然冒出来的名字。

Rendering 2: 我惊跳起来, 正想去驱散那些纠缠不清的名字时...

Both the renderings translate ‘rouse myself to...’ into 惊跳起来, in fact, *rouse oneself* means to overcome one’s indolence, in Chinese 克服惰性, 在此为振作起来, 或打起精神, 排除处于混乱状态下脑海中幻想出的东西。

Example 3:

“I wer sure he’d sarve ye out!”

T1: 我准知道他要赶你们出来!

T2: 我准知道他叫你们知道了他的厉害, 这是活该!

Sarve = serve, and serve somebody out: “(Brit. Archaic colloq.) retaliate on”, in Chinese 向某人报复, 使某人受罚. Thus the sentence should be

rendered as: 我准知道他会向你们报复的!

"If I war yah, maister, I'd just slam t' boards i' their faces all on'em, gentle and simple!"

Someone translates it into:

如果我是你，我就不论他们是贵是贱都给他们一頓耳光...

"Slam the door in somebody's face" means 拒绝某人进入, therefore the correct rendering should be "我要是你, 主人, 就不分贵贱, 一律让他们吃闭门羹".

Sometimes the situation becomes complicated when an idiom offers a reasonable literal interpretation. For example:

He labored under a severe sense of mortification and wrath, which it was no easy task to suppress.

T1: 他是在一种严重的屈辱与愤怒的感觉下苦斗, 要压制下去是不容易的事。

T2: 他是在跟深深的屈辱、猛烈的怒火挣扎着, 要把那汹涌的感情压制下去可真不容易啊。

Neither of the translators considers "labor under" as an idiom, the definition of which is, "be the victim of, suffer because of: 受害于, 苦于", therefore, the sentence should be rendered as 一种强烈的屈辱和愤怒感使他很苦恼, 而要把这种情感压下去绝非易事。

Another difficult situation is that an idiom of the source language may have a very close counterpart in the target language. They look similar in form, but bear totally or partially different meanings. "to pull someone's leg" is very similar with Chinese idiom 拖某人的后腿。But in English, it means to tell someone something untrue as a joke in order to shock them temporarily and amuse them when they find out later that it was a

joke, which is better translated into 开玩笑。*To sing a different tune* is an English idiom that seems to be equivalent to the Chinese idiom 唱对台戏, in fact, the two idioms have different meanings. *To sing a different tune* means “to say or do something that signals a change in opinion because it contradicts what one has said or done before”. For example: “You say you don’t believe in marriage, but I bet you sing a different song (tune) when you finally fall in love”. “你说你认为结婚是无所谓的,但我肯定你最终爱上一个人的时候你就不这么说了”。Here means to change one’s idea. But the Chinese idiom 唱对台戏, which seems the very counterpart of *to sing a different tune*, has a quite different usage and means “to be against others’ political stand or idea” instead of “saying something contrary to one’s own idea at a later time”. *To skate on thin ice* seems to be equivalent to the Chinese idiom 如履薄冰. In fact, it means “to act unwisely or court danger voluntarily” (谈论或做易引起分歧、意见或其他麻烦的事) in English. For example: “We could ignore him and go direct to the chairman, but we’d be skating on very thin ice.”我们可以不理会他而直接去找主席, 但那样做就可能会惹麻烦. Here the rendering 惹麻烦 is more accurate than 如履薄冰, for the meaning of 如履薄冰 in Chinese is 比喻戒惧敬慎的心理, 小心翼翼, 怕犯错误(*do something cautiously in fear of making mistakes* instead of *voluntarily court danger*). Although similar in both form and meaning, the contexts in which the two idioms can be used are slightly different.

In some circumstances, a couple of words may seem to be an idiom, but after careful study in the context, they are words happen to be put together, but cannot be treated as an idiom that functions as a meaning

unit. For example:

He remembered suddenly that his father had changed the dogmas of his religion at forty-five, and *thereby lost a cure of souls*. He was very unhappy; it was like discovering that he had inherited tuberculosis. (John Galsworthy, *Conscience*)

A translator renders the italicized part into 从而使自己的灵魂未能得救。 *Cure of souls* here equals to “curacy”. The hero of this story lost his position in a newspaper office, and felt like having inherited tuberculosis. Thus the correct rendering is: 因此去了一个牧师的职位。

Another example:

The process has not yet *gone beyond recall*. (but it is only too likely that it will continue unchecked if something is not done to find another way out).

It has been rendered into: 这种经历还是记忆犹新。

According to the context, *the process* refers to the worsening situation of Rhodesia, which was still an on-going process. Therefore the translation should be: 这一过程现在还没有达到无可挽回的地步。

### III Clumsiness of renderings at sentence and text levels

We view the text as a whole both at the beginning and at the end of the process of translation. After understanding the text, a translator has to fulfill the task of producing a target version that can be accepted as a text in its own right. Besides the phraseological, collocational and grammatical patterning, the rendering as a whole should make sense to target readers. Otherwise the translation may still sound foreign or clumsy. As Nida said, the task of the translator might therefore be

defined in terms of “reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent to the message of the source language”. Therefore, a translator must have a good understanding of the differences between the source and target languages, and check the target text at different language levels and aspects according to the target context.

The clumsiness of rendering is the major problem in finding equivalence at the text level. The clumsiness often rises where differences exist between the two languages in question in syntactic structure and mentality.

The ways that sentences are organized together are language- and culture-specific. Chinese and English belong to different language families and they share fewer similarities than some other languages do, that is why it is necessary to study their differences and adjust the target text at different levels and aspects of language. These differences are the basis on which we choose the very transmitting skill in translating from the source language to the target one.

### 1) Syntactic adjustment

When different syntactic structures exist between English and Chinese, a translator should adjust them in order that the sentence conforms to Chinese linguistic context. Nida once pointed out, “... but a person’s oversight or inability to rearrange the semantic units in accordance with the different syntactic structure immediately stamps a translation as being ‘foreign’ and unnatural”. Zhu Shenghao explained that: “... Whenever I find discrepancy between the source grammar and the Chinese one, I’ll think it over and over. In order to make clear the author’s intention, I have to change the structure of the source text to such a degree that the

ideas become transparent in Chinese". For examples:

1) He also concluded that insight into prehistoric cultures should *ideally* proceed from knowledge of living creatures.

他还得出这样的结论：要对史前各种文化有深刻的认识，应从了解现存的种种生物着手，**这是最理想的方法。**

In English, the adverb *ideally* is in the middle of the sentence, but it modifies the whole sentence. In the Chinese rendering, it is placed at the end of the sentence.

2) It is only when the plane passes through the sound barrier, either speeding up or slowing down, that the compression waves are encountered.

Rendering 1. 只有当飞机跨越音障时，不管是加速还是减速，它都要遇到压缩波。

Rendering 2. 只有当飞机加速或减速穿越音障时，才会遇到压缩波。

The first rendering is a fragmented sentence in Chinese, and the second one is neat in structure and clear in meaning.

3) Somebody tapped me on the shoulder, I looked up from the exercise books of my young pupils, which I was just correcting, into *the lined, kindly face of a little lay sister.*

我正在为小学生批改作业，有人轻轻拍了拍我的肩膀。我抬头一看，原来是那个做杂役的修女，她个子矮小，满脸皱纹，和蔼可亲。(比较：原来是那个个子矮小，做杂役的修女的满脸皱纹、和蔼可亲的脸。)

In English, verbs can indicate two types of information: time and aspect. "Time" indicates when the event takes place and "aspect" shows whether the event is completed, continuing or momentary. But in Chinese,

verbs do not carry the same information as their English counterparts do, and some of the information is conveyed by adverbs in the sentences. For example:

He is working in Beijing. 他在北京工作。

He was working in Beijing. 他当时在北京工作。

Verbs in both English and Chinese have two forms of voice: active and passive. In active clauses, the subject is the agent responsible for performing the action; in passive clauses, the subject is the affected entity, and the agent may or may not be specified. But the frequency and usage of the two voices in the two languages are different. In English, passive voice is used in most cases in scientific and technical writings to impress readers of objectivity, while in Chinese, “the main function of the passive structures is to express adversity or report unfortunate events”(In Other Words:107). In translating, it is wise to substitute active structures for passive structures of English to avoid negative connotation.

Here are some examples of how passive structures are replaced by active ones in Chinese.

1) Many have been nursed back to health from the brink of starvation.

许多(大熊猫)通过护理而从饿死的边缘恢复了健康。

2) A certain number of characteristic errors have been pointed out by linguists and can be usefully recalled at this point.

语言学家已指出一定数量的典型错误，如今回顾一下，是不无裨益的。

An event can be expressed positively or negatively if viewed differently. Some negative sentences in English are usually expressed positively in Chinese, and vice versa. At McDonald, there is a sign that

reads: "Seating Reserved for Consumption of McDonald Food Only", and the Chinese version is: 请勿在本餐厅内进食非麦当劳食品或饮料。

Other examples:

That lazy boy went to class before he had prepared his lessons.

那个懒惰的小孩没有预习就去上课。

He was above receiving bribes.

他拒不收受贿赂。

That little bridge is anything but safe.

那座小桥极不安全。

And if he did not try to knock me down.

令人吃惊的是他竟欲把我打倒。

I never see her but I want to kiss her.

我一看见她就想吻她。

English belongs to hypotaxis language featuring in completeness of sentence structure with attributives (or attributive clauses), adverbials (or adverbial clauses) and other modifiers, the structure of which is like a tree having many branches. But Chinese is the parataxis type of language noted for its short, simple and separate but semantically related sentences, each sentence being theme-theme ordered. Thus whether a translator employs one or the other Chinese form depends primarily upon the so-called "flow of the language" in the target language text. In other words, the choice of a particular equivalent depends largely upon the total context of the discourse.

The following is an example of how a long and complicated sentence is taken apart to several short sentences and rearranged to a coherent

target text.

Oh, Simplicio, if I should succeed in convincing you of the artfulness—though it is no great artistry—of this author, I should rouse you to wonder—and also to indignation—when you discovered how he, covering his cunning with the veil of your naivete and that of other mere philosophers, tries to insinuate himself into your good graces by gratifying your ear and puffing up your ambition, pretending to have convicted and silenced these trifling astronomers who wanted to assail the ineradicable inalterability of the Peripatetic heavens, and what is more, to have struck them dumb and overpowered them with their own weapons.

The sentence is long and complicated. In order to understand it better, we divide it into three parts. ‘Oh, Simplicio, I wish I could convince you of the artfulness—though it is no great artistry—of this author’ is the first sentence. ‘When you discovered how he did this, I should rouse you to wonder—and also to indignation.’ is the last part that will be put at the end of the paragraph. ‘He, covering his cunning with the veil...with their own weapons.’ is the second sentence that needs further division.

After the first step of taking the text apart, we begin to analyze the long sentence between the first and third parts. In analyzing the second part, we may divide it into three separate shorter sentences: He, covering his cunning with the veil of your naivete and that of other mere philosophers, tries to insinuate himself into your graces. (2.1) He pretends to have convicted and silenced these trifling astronomers who wanted to assail the ineradicable inalterability of the Peripatetic heavens, and what is more, to have struck them dumb and overpowers them with

their own weapons. (2.2) In this way he gratifies your ear and puffs up your ambition. (2.3). After doing all the analytic work and taking apart of the long sentences into several shorter ones coherent in meaning, the translation becomes easier:

啊，辛普利邱，但愿我能够说服你，使你看出这位作者的伎俩—虽则并不是怎样高明的伎俩。他利用你的天真和其他不懂天文学的哲学家的天真，为自己打掩护，企图博取你们的欢心。他把那些想要攻击逍遥学派天界的稳定性和不可动摇性的天文学家，说成是毫不足道的，并自命已经驳倒他们，使他们无辞以答；不但如此，他还自命用他们自己的武器驳得他们哑口无言，无力还击。他就利用这种伎俩使你觉得娓娓动听，并鼓起你的无名勇气，如果你一旦发现他是怎样做到这样的，我当会引起你的惶惑—并且使你感到愤慨。

Adjustment of theme and theme position is also involved in English and Chinese translation. Chinese language organizes its sentence paratactically, and is more likely to put the new and the most important information at the end of the sentence. In translating an English text into Chinese, it is necessary in most cases to adjust the order of some sentences according to end-focus principle. See how the following sentences move the focus to the end of the sentence when translated into Chinese:

1) *You can get a good deal of fun out of observing the course of events in which you are no longer intimately concerned.*

你可以冷眼观察一些和你不再密切相关的事态发展，从中得到不少乐趣。

2) *And the worst of it is that it does not matter two straws to Nature, the mother of us all, how dreadfully we misbehave ourselves in this way, or*

in what agonies we die.

最糟糕的是：不管我们人类的这种丑行多么可怕，不管我们怎样痛苦地死去，**大自然—我们的母亲—都将毫不介意。**

3) In a kindergarten, a group of small children are learning Beatles songs. The children are French; and so is the teacher. For half an hour in this nursery in the suburbs of Paris, she addresses them exclusively in English. *Their middle-class parents are digging into household budgets to prepare these children for the world to come.*

在一所幼儿园里，一群小孩子正在学唱披头士歌曲。孩子们是法国儿童，教师也是法国人。她在巴黎郊区的这所幼儿园的半个小时里，全部用英语授课。**孩子们的中产阶级父母为了使这些孩子为走进未来的世界做好准备，正努力节省他们的家庭开支。**

The rheme of the italicized sentence is “to prepare these children for the world to come”, therefore in translating the sentence into Chinese, the order of the sentence should be rearranged according to the Chinese way of word order: **孩子们的中产阶级父母哪怕节衣缩食，也要让孩子为进入将来的世界做好准备。**

The rendering should also be in accordance with Chinese context in literary genre and style of language. The following two examples compare two ways of Chinese rendering, the second of which is the equivalent translation both in meaning and style:

1) After the championships with the Chicago Bulls, a second gold medal with the U.S. team at the 1992 Olympics, and all the accolades the game can bestow, Jordan felt his motivation slipping away.

T1: 在芝加哥公牛队打球得三次冠军，在美国队打球于 1992 年奥林匹克运动会获得第二枚金牌，并获得篮球所能给予的一切荣誉之后，

乔丹说他打球的动力在消退。

T2: 在加盟芝加哥公牛队连获三冠, 入主美国队于 1992 年再获奥运金牌, 并囊括篮球运动各项殊荣之后, 乔丹觉得自己打球的动力已日渐消退。

2) We acknowledge receipt of your inquiry of August 2, asking us to make you a firm offer for 500 dozen Tiantan Brand men's silk shirts in various sizes and colors, for September shipment to Odense.

T1: 我们收到了你们 8 月 2 日的来函, 你们要求我们就 500 打各种尺寸各种颜色的天坛牌男绸衬衣做出报价, 于 9 月运抵奥登赛。

8 月 2 日询盘收悉。贵方要求我方报出实盘: 500 打各种尺码、各种颜色的天坛牌男绸衬衫, 9 月装船, 欧登赛交货。

#### 4. Cohesion and coherence of rendering at discourse level

Peter Newmark writes in one of his works, "... operatively, most translation is done at the level of the smaller units (word and clause), leaving the larger units to 'work' automatically, until a difficulty occurs and until revision starts." Cohesion and coherence of the discourse is as important as, if not more important than the equivalence at lower language levels. The following are examples to show how important it is to take into consideration the context of the target text as a whole.

1) When I reached the age of twelve I left the school forever and got my first full-time job, as a grocer's boy. I spent my days carrying heavy loads, but I enjoyed it. *It was only my capacity for hard work that saved me from early dismissal, for I could never stomach speaking to my 'betters' with the deference my employer thought I should assume.*

T1: 我十二岁那年就永远离开了学校, 并且找到了整活干, 最初是在一家食品杂货店里当伙计。我整天扛很重的货物, 干得也挺带劲。

要不是能干重活，我早就被辞退了。因为老板想要我必恭必敬地跟那些“上等人”说话，这样干，我实在受不了。

The rendering of the last sentence is logically disordered, which is hard for the reader to accept the information readily. We can put it in this way, and the idea seems much clearer: 可是老板想要我必恭必敬地跟那些“上等人”说话，我实在难以做到，要不是能干重活，我早就给辞退了。

2) It is not only military secrets that Communists steal now. Today they are after trade and technical data, too. Growing contacts in the west make their job easier.

目前（苏联）共产党人不光窃取军事秘密，也在猎取贸易和技术方面的情报资料。由于和西方的接触日益扩大，他们干这种勾当就容易多了。The first two sentences are combined together as progressive compound, while the subject of the last sentence is translated into a clause of reason.

The following are two examples of the rearrangement among the clauses of a sentence:

1) For though Adolf Hitler at first considered retiring to the Austro-Bavarian mountains near which he was born and in which he had spent most of the private hours of his life, and which he loved and where he had the only home he could call his own—on the Obersalzberg above Berchtesgaden—and there *made a last stand*, he had hesitated until it was too late.

希特勒最初诚然考虑过退到奥地利与巴伐利亚深山中去，进行最后的抵抗，因为他是在那附近出生的，一生中私下的时间大部分也是在那里度过的，他喜爱那个地方，在伯希特斯加登上面的上萨

尔斯堡山上又有那唯一可说是属于他自己的家，但他迟疑不决，把事情耽误了。

The rendering moves “there made a last stand” after the clause “considered retiring to the Austro-Bavarian mountains”, and then changed the four attributive clauses into adverbial ones.

Another example of adjusting the attributive clauses according to their potential logic relations:

On the other hand, the person who is really guilty and whose past experience has prepared him for such tests can *distort the results* by anticipating the crucial questions or deliberately giving exaggerated responses to neutral ones!

另一方面，一个真正犯了罪的人却可能因为曾经有过这方面的经验，而对关键问题有所防备，或对中性的问题故作夸大的反应，致使测试结果失真。

#### IV Strategies for cultural gap

Language and culture are closely related, and the language difference in a sense reflects those between cultures. *Kinship* is one of the focuses of Chinese culture, and Chinese has a rather complicated and colossal system of kinship words indicating the relationship between family members; *snow* is a most important physical phenomenon for Eskimos, and they make very complex distinctions about snow in the sky, on the ground...for which other cultures have no equivalent word; hunting is a tradition in Britain, and raising dogs as pets is popular among the English people, therefore they have more detailed distinction for various kinds of dogs—as for the Chinese 猎狗, in English it is further divided into *hound, spaniel, mastiff, pointer, setter, retriever, terrier* among others.

It is not uncommon for a translator working from English to Chinese to be confronted with the problem of cultural gap at different levels, and cannot find the equivalence in Chinese. The cultural gap is in fact the lack of socio-cultural context in the target language. In order to realize the purpose of communication, several strategies exist for making up the gaps.

### 1. Zero translation

In most cases, the lack of experience in the receptor language can be dealt with by Zero translation, which involves two main skills; one is transliteration, and the other, transference.

Transliteration is widely used in translating proper names of people and place. Besides, it is also employed in the cultural phenomenon newly introduced into the target language. For example, show-秀, cool-酷, hacker-黑客, party-派对, Pizza-比萨. Chinese is very active in using the transliterated word to coin new words and phrases: after accepting the term 秀, we have coined 脱口秀 and 作秀; for 酷, we have coined 酷毙了.

In case of transference, the receptor language directly uses the terms of source language, such as the terms that frequently appear in newspapers and magazines. The transference terms include: VCD, DVD, WTO, WHO, DNA, etc., and those used in computer industry.

### 2. Supplying the necessary context information that is not given by the original text.

Sometimes some elements of context, whether lexical or situational, are not shown in the immediate context of the source text. If it stands as a barrier for the target readers to have a sound understanding of the text,

then the translator must supply them in the renderings. Or there will be ambiguity that causes misunderstanding. For example:

But neither psychiatric interviews nor objective tests were able to show any effects upon these American sailors.

T1: 但是进行精神病走访或对象实验在这些美国水兵身上都不能显示出效果。

After carefully studying the text, we may find that “any effects upon these American sailors” = “any effects of noise upon these American Sailors”, here “noise” does not appear as the immediate context, but was mentioned elsewhere in the text, which we call a remote context. Although it is not given in the source text, it must be given in the target one, otherwise, the target readers cannot understand it. Therefore the translation can be changed into: 但是, 无论精神病学方面的调查, 还是客观的试验都表明, 噪音对这些美国水兵并没有发生什么影响。

Another example:

There are some kinds of rays from the sun which would burn us to death if we *were not protected* from them.

T1: 太阳中有些光线射到我们身上会把我们烧死, 如果我们不防备的话。

In fact, the agent of the verb “protect” is atmospheric layer, which appears in sentences preceding this one. Therefore, we may render the sentence this way:

T2: 如果不是受到大气层保护的话, 我们就会被太阳烧死。

### 3. Adding notes

Sometimes the source text may involve allusions, literary quotations, historical events or cultural activities, which the source language readers

are very familiar with. For example, Waterloo is a village in Belgium, where Napoleon was finally defeated in 1815, and is later often referred to as a decisive defeat or an irrevocable end; Hannibal is a Carthaginian general symbolizing courage and bravery (just like the Chinese figure Guan Yu or Zhang Fei). But being in a different culture, the target readers may not be able to share the same cultural background as the source readers, then it is the translator's responsibility to add footnotes or endnotes to explain the cultural context contained in the source text. For example:

It is true that U.S. courts constrained police and prosecutors in the interests of the rights of criminal defendants through a series of Supreme Court decisions in the 1960's, most notably *Miranda v. Arizona*.

美国法庭在 60 年代的确通过了一系列最高法院决议，为了刑事被告的权利，限制了警察和检察官，最著名的是“米兰达原则对亚利桑那”（Miranda V. Arizona）\*

\* 米兰达原则，指美国最高法院规定在讯问在押的嫌疑分子之前，侦查人员必须告知对方有保持缄默，不作自证其罪的供词，并有权聘请律师，要求询问时有律师在场等。--译注

Another example:

Those explanations that link changes in cultural variables to specific events in American history like Vietnam, Watergate, or the *counterculture* \* of the 1960s betray an even greater provincialism...

那些将文化变量的变化与美国历史上的特定事件，如越南战争，水门事件或 1960 年代反正统文化等联系起来的解释，暴露出了更为严重的地方主义倾向...

\* 反正统文化（*counterculture*），指的是 20 世纪 60 年代和 70 年代

美国青年中形成的一种文化群落，表现为反传统的生活方式和思想道德观念。 --译注

Some allusions need to be given the original texts in which they first appear, especially when they are used as the titles of literary works. A short story, written by the famous British writer W. S. Maugham, is entitled *Cakes and Ale*. It is about a wife who does not conform to social conventions. It seems at first sight that there is little connection between the title and the story, but in fact the title is quoted from one of Shakespeare's plays, meaning "one cannot prevent others from enjoying cakes and ale due to one's own self-restricted principle. The intention of the author is to imply that the readers should not judge the heroine by the traditional restricted moral standard. Sometimes it is hard even for a native reader, let alone the foreigners, to understand the implied meaning of a title and the story if the cultural context is not given.

But cultural gap is not something stagnant. With the increasing speed of globalization, there will be more and more cultural contacts and exchanges between different languages and cultures, the result of which is that some aspects of foreign cultures maybe assimilated into the native one. The process can only be accomplished with the help of translating activities. In a sense it has proved the important role translation plays in interlingual and intercultural communication.

## Conclusion

“No context, no text”. Context is the indispensable factor in the translating process. There are various divisions of context, this thesis divides context into four major categories: linguistic context, situational context, personal idiolect and context of the target text and target language. The importance of context lies not only in the role it plays in understanding the source text at different language levels, but also in that it may check the rendering and ensure a natural and acceptable target text existing in its own right, the latter of which is the one of the important focuses of the thesis.

The collocation, grammar and usage of the target language are opaque instead of transparent in the text, therefore, it is necessary to specially emphasize the importance of the two aspects of the target context—both linguistic and cultural ones. It requires both the translator’s literary capacity of the target language and a good understanding of the potential readers’ cultural reality to produce an acceptable rendering. In the aspect of literary capacity, one substantial factor is the translator’s ability to distinguish the differences of all language levels between two languages and cultures and find the way out; in the aspect of cultural context, the translator should be highly conscious of the cultural differences of the two peoples, and try to make up for the gaps lying between them. As the transmitting process involves the translator’s anticipatory work, therefore in producing a qualified translation, the mastery of the target language and culture is just as important as, if not more important than that of the source one, for they are two aspects of the same process.

In short, both source language context and target language context are inextricable aspects in the translation activity. Only when the translator deals with both contexts consciously and carefully can he or she produce an end product accepted by target readers, and thus can the translation gain new life in the target language and culture.

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