

How Culture Affecting English - Vietnamese Book Translation



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ABSTRACT: Translation plays an integral part in both Vietnamese literature and spiritual life. However, to reach well-translated works and documents, translators have to face many difficulties in handling cultural implications. This article discusses the relationship and the cultural factors of the updated translation process. The factors that would make the translated text change are staying the same, changing partially, or changing the whole context. Thanks to the article, the translators would be aware of how to prepare not only their background knowledge but also their translation techniques during the translation process.

KEYWORDS: translation, culture, factors, different.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In recent years, when walking around bookstores and bookshelves, we have easily encountered foreign literary works. The book market has never been as diverse and constantly updated as it is currently. On plenty of book-favorite- forums, groups of someone who like reading, book associations, book clubs, discussion topics, and book reviewing pages, they're mostly found translated works, either long novels or short stories, self-help books to develop skills, business and commerce books, even the Nobel Prize achieved works. The publications translated and published in Vietnam have become increasingly productive and updated continuously. Therefore, Vietnamese readers would find deeper access to a variety of literature originating from different countries, which facilitates their integration process into world literature. In the context of globalization today, the introduction of foreign books is suitable for both the tastes and needs of readers and contributes to arousing and directing new compositions for the country's literature. The translated literature and translation market has been continuously growing day by day and has taken an essential role in most community's lives.

Translation of any period should originate from the cultural consciousness in translation. However, in recent years, it may be that the readers have become more and more severe with the translation quality, so many books have been poorly commented publicly on their translated version quality, such as *Finding the Dragon Lady - the mystery of Vietnam's madame Nhu* (Madam Nhu Trần Lê Xuân – Quyển lục Bà Rồng) by Monique Brinson Demery - USA, *La carte et le territoire (Bản đồ và vùng đất)* by French author Michel Houellebecq published by Literature Publishing House and Nha Nam Culture and Media Joint Stock Company), or recently, *How To Build A Brilliant Business (10 lời khuyên khởi nghiệp)* written by Acorns, published by Alpha Books Joint-Stock Company. The fact is that mistakes in translation works are unavoidable, especially in translating publications, where translators need to convey not only the content but also the message, which is the artistic characteristic as well as the author's implication. Therefore, in the translation field, the translators must be good enough at both foreign languages and their mother languages. Also, they need to have insight into an extensive cultural background to avoid cultural differences affecting the translation quality and leading to possible errors such as mistranslations. It is hard to deny that translation is an effective and meaningful social tool. So, is the translation influenced by social perspectives? How do cultural factors affect translation? This article aims to provide an overview of cultural factors' influence on translation work in general and translated book publications in particular, thereby supporting translators to understand which knowledge and skills they need to overcome difficulties in the translation process and make the most of translation quality.

1.1 Definition of culture

"Culture" is often used with different meanings, but the concept of "culture" can be approached in two ways: in a broad sense or a narrow sense. Understood in a narrow sense, culture is the value in each specific field, such as social culture or business culture ... In addition, it is also the typical value of each region, such as Northern culture and Southern culture. In a broad sense, culture is all artificial values. In the year 1940, President Ho Chi Minh wrote: "Culture is the combination of all human modes of living and its manifestations that created by mankind in order to adapt to the needs and demands of life and the requirements to survival." [Ho Chi Minh 1995: 431]

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Therefore, culture is an umbrella term that encompasses the social behavior and norms of all aspects found in human societies, whether materially or spiritually. "Society" depicts an overview picture as being mentioned, while "culture" makes mention of human life. In the Longman Encyclopedia, "Culture" is defined as the whole meaning, values, moral principles, modes of thinking, behaviors, expression of thoughts, spoken words, and ways of living...Those are characteristics of each nation, community, or social category. (1989: 271)

Besides, language and culture have consistently grown up in parallel because they are specially born by society and are associated with the cultural formation and development process of a nation. A definition of "culture" by Peter Newmark wrote: "Is the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression" (1988: 94) (là phương thức phản ánh đời sống và biểu lộ những đặc trưng riêng biệt của một cộng đồng với một ngôn ngữ riêng biệt nhằm biểu đạt chính nền văn hoá đó). Therefore, to learn and adopt a new language, it is necessary to consider the translation of that language from the appropriate cultural perspective.

1.2 Definition of translation

According to Andrew Chesterman's study in *Interpreting the Meaning of Translation* (2005), the word "translation" is derived from the Greek word "metaphor in" and the word "transferred" in Latin, which means conveying some message (carrying something across) (Chesterman, 2005, 5). Ghazzala (1995) defines translation as any process of conveying language meaning from one language to another. The truth is that translation is the work of transferring the information expressed in the source language into the target language while fully preserving its implied meaning and content. Or, according to the dictionary Meriam-Webster (1994) (quoted by Larson, 10.3), translation involves a change to a different substance, form, or appearance to become itself in another language.

Translation is an essential means to not only open the integration door but also bridge to shorten the cultural gap between the two nations and eliminate the differences between the two linguistic communities, thereby supporting those who are not born with the same mother language to understand each other, and breaking difference gap between countries. Translation not only plays the role of content delivery but also acts as a means of cultural transfer.

THE RELATION OF CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND BOOK TRANSLATION

There is a viewpoint that culture and translation are interrelated and interrelated. However, the fact that these two concepts are closely related has proven the existence of a close relationship between them. It is the translation that clearly depicts the culture itself more sharply in a comparative relation with the others. And this is achieved through cultural translation. On the other hand, if there is no culture, the translation cannot convey entirely the content with the implication that the author wishes to send to the reader/listener. According to Toury (1978: 200), "Translation is a kind of activity which inevitably involves at least two languages and two cultural traditions" (dịch thuật là hoạt động liên quan tới ít nhất hai ngôn ngữ và hai truyền thống văn hoá khác nhau). Therefore, translators always face difficulties in processing cultural features in the source text and finding the most compatible characteristics in the target text to convey the hidden message correctly.

Currently, with the explosion of information technology, especially Google Translate, users only need to select the source language and target language, then enter text to translate into an available blank cell, and the results (translated text) will appear in the opposite black cell. Users evaluate that this is a valuable tool and may it can completely replace the human translator in the future; however, in essence, it is just a mechanical system, programmed based on a formation of word recognition and rendering equivalent results but not able to understand fully the implied message or meaning of the sentences. The cultural factors with profound layers by layers of elites in every language have not been counted in the statement mentioned above. For example, when the below sentence is entered for machine translation: "Ba tặng con món quà," ridiculously, the result text "Three gave me a gift" appeared in the translated box. In essence, "ba" is the word that the South Vietnamese used to call their father. But it came out as "three" - a word for counting the number "3" in English as an equivalent word in another language. This is just a tiny example of the countless "translation disasters" caused by Google Translation, so it is the firm reason for us to consider translation to be a brilliant work.

Carrying out the work of translating books, translators need help with strange vocabulary and complex grammatical structures. Besides the two main difficulties in terms of this linguistic ability, the problems in socio-cultural factors account for a significant part. The translator must pay attention not only to the whole book's content but also to the socio-cultural elements because translation is not only about replacing the original text with a text in another language but also facilitating the reader to access the implications hidden in the source text. To do this, we need to understand non-linguistic elements and cross-cultural communication. Hermans (1996) wrote, "Previously, translation was considered as a conversion from one text to another, from one language to another. Today, translation is a complex process, taking place in the context of social and cultural communication. This requires the translator to place himself entirely in that picture of social interaction."

Discussing translation compatibility, Nida compared that the importance of linguistic and cultural differences is equal; he also concluded that: "differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for translators than due to differences in language structure" (Nida, 1964: 130) (điểm khác biệt về văn hoá có thể gây ra những khó khăn nghiêm trọng cho người dịch còn

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hơn cả những khác biệt về cấu trúc ngôn ngữ). Therefore, cultural characteristics in the translation are as important as the semantics of words in the translation.

CULTURAL FACTORS AFFECTING BOOK TRANSLATION

For many book translators, the translating job takes a lot of time and effort not only because of the large volume of the work but also because of the spirit and meaning hidden in that work. First of all, to understand the spirit of the work, translators need to understand the context and background of the work as well as the culture of indigenous people. In the book "Tiếng Việt văn Việt người Việt" (Vietnamese linguistics, literature, and people), Professor Cao Xuan Hao wrote: "There must be a certain connection Between the voice of a nation and its culture. Because language directly reflects the world perceptions and thinking of the shared community, while national culture cannot be unrelated to the way of perception and thinking formation." [Page 287]. For example, British / American English speakers are very concise, condensed, and easy to understand, but the vocabulary is highly diverse and close. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese language is rich in images and descriptive; the sentences need elaboration and smoothness. Not only that, but the difficulty in vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, as well as the ideological mindset, also has its cultural characteristics.

It is possible to consider the cultural traits behind each translated document as a result of the process of exploring, researching, and considering possible possibilities before deciding on solutions for the final translation.

Therefore, if the translator is not willing to invest in reading documents of native speakers, it is difficult to identify the proper context and convey the appropriate meaning of well-compiled sentences or works.

3.1 Cultural Differences Affecting Translation

A translator without awareness of cultural context, as well as customs, traditions or idioms, and background knowledge related to the translation but only converts source text into target text based on the word-facing meaning quickly makes mistakes, even severe misunderstandings in their translation.

For example, in the book Madam Nhu Trần Lê Xuân – Quyển lục Bà Ròng, the translation reads Mr. Ngo Dinh Can as "người anh chồng (elder brother of husband) của bà Nhu" (page 19) or "anh rể (husband of elder sister) của bà, Ngô Đình Cẩn, vẫn còn ở Việt Nam sau đảo chính" (page 310); however, in fact Mr. Cẩn is the younger brother of Mr. Nhu, means that the correct translating must be "em chồng của bà Nhu." Perhaps in the source text, the word "brother" in English is used for both younger and elder brothers. This mistake is brutal to avoid, requiring translators to be familiar with or really study the context of the situation during the translation process.

Another example, in the book titled "10 lời khuyên khởi nghiệp" published by Alphabooks, there is a sentence that: "Business is not a rocket science" (it means business is a different industry that is simpler than the science of rocket (Vietnamese: kinh doanh đâu phải là môn khoa học về tên lửa). To understand this advice, we must first realize that rocket science is a challenging field of study; the phrase "rocket science" is used to illustrate complicated things, so this sentence can be translated as: "kinh doanh không hề khó tới vậy." (means that business is not that kind of difficulty)." But perhaps in Vietnam, there is no rocket science industry, so it is challenging to catch fully the content's meaning, so it is translated into: "Kinh doanh không hề dễ dàng." (Doing business is not easy)

During the translation process, if we read the original text passively, refusing to take deep access to infer and understand the text correctly, it is easier to deduce the correct author's intention and implication. Especially in book translation, more than correct translation is needed; well-processed and inspiring translation must be taken into consideration. "Well processed and inspiring" means the translation needs to be conveyed smoothly and sufficiently regarding each vocabulary, phrase, and sentence to be received and accepted broadly and popularly by the readers. For example, with the title of the top best-selling book "How to Win Friends and Influence People." (Vietnamese: Làm thế nào để chiến thắng và tạo ảnh hưởng tới người khác) Dale Carnegie, the well-known translator Nguyen Hien Le has successfully adapted its title into "Đắc Nhân Tâm." The success mentioned here is that instead of literally translating from the original text and meaning, translator Nguyen Hien Le applied a pun with words derived from Chinese to create the translated title. Inherently, Vietnamese culture is influenced by Chinese culture, especially by Chinese characters. Therefore, with the title Đắc Nhân Tâm (reaching people's hearts), the translator has brought readers a sense of serenity and lightness but still depicts the profound and sufficient meaning of the original text.

Moreover, there are alliterative expressions, onomatopoeia, and pictographic words (từ tượng hình) in Vietnamese, which can be translated into the target language with the equivalent content quickly. Still, it isn't easy to guarantee the semantic nuance equivalent because there are very few words in English used similarly to these kinds mentioned. Taking following examples: "lạnh", "lạnh lẽo", "lạnh lùng" are translated as "cold"; "héo", "héo hon", "héo hắt" are translated as "wither". Vietnamese people tend to take characteristics, appearance, or form to name things, creating the basic meaning of the word. For example, the word "củ" can be used to refer to tubers that are buried deep in the ground (such as cassava tuber, potato tuber, etc.) but also used to refer to tubers floating on the ground (kohlrabi tubers ...); however, in the English language, each of the tubers has a unique name without a common name for all.

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Language has always been inherited and developed over time; therefore, the same word but in different contexts and different backgrounds carries different nuances and meanings with it. For example, young generations are increasingly updating metaphorical words, using various images to simulate. In Vietnam in recent decades, there have been phrases such as "phi công trẻ lái máy bay bà già" (young pilots flying in an old plane" (referring to couples in love, in which the man is younger than woman) or even borrowed other images such as "Looking as dark as Mrs. Dau's future" (Mrs Dau is a character in the book "Tắt Đèn" by writer Ngô Tat To; she is an impoverished farmer at the most of the society that time, so she is oppressed and exploited; her future is filled with obscurity and darkness). Even if the source text is written in the native language (as in the example above, it is written in Vietnamese), the translator himself needs to master the trends tendency and understand the cultural characteristics of the times or even needs to understand the cultural characteristics when using literary images, or images with high popularity. In addition, to translate into the target language, we also need to understand the artistic trend of the target language to find appropriate illustrative images, counter-balance, and equivalence; if not, the translation just can be processed on the surface. In conclusion, to be able to carry out the translation process, whatever aspect or stand the translator takes, they also must be a researcher, no matter whether they want it or not.

3.2 Cultural differences make a comprehensive transformation in the translated text.

Each country has its own geographical, historical, customary, and spiritual characteristics; It is a unique culture specific to each nation. In translation, we also encounter those words and images that are rich in cultural features, so when translating into the target language, translators encounter many difficulties because it is difficult or even impossible to find comparable words or images that can match in meaning or semantic content. For example, in Western countries, it is normal for parents to kiss their children on the mouth, but it isn't easy to accept in Eastern culture; so if translated literally, the reader will feel a totally different nuance of meaning from the translated text. Based on this perception, we can translate: "He kissed his daughter on the mouth" into "ông âu yếm ôm con gái mình" (he lovingly hugged his daughter)."

Vietnamese culture, as well as Eastern countries, is primarily influenced by Chinese culture, in which the dragon symbolizes an extreme power. The Vietnamese consider the dragon to be a symbol of prosperity and luck; However, in Western culture, the dragon is regarded as a fierce monster that symbolizes cruelty and greed. Therefore, when translating the Bible, in order to convey the image of the dragon in English, the translator must find an equivalent descriptive noun such as "Cobra" or "Python" (the animals often cause bad in Vietnamese fairy tales). Conversely, when conveying images of developed countries such as Japan and Singapore as "con rồng Châu Á (Asian dragons)", translators will use the equivalent image in English as "Tiger (con hổ)" rather than keeping the word "dragon" again.

One of the necessary skills for translation is document researching; translators need a particular cultural understanding of the topic to be translated. For example, the phrase "Boxing Day," if literally translated (in translation called "translation word by word ") means "a day for boxing activity." However, it is a holiday in England, and on this day, people will give gifts to the mail carriers and deliverers. Therefore, if you are not sure about the culture, it is inevitable that you will mistranslate.

In work *And The Mountains echoed* (translation: *Và núi non vọng lại*), writer Khaled Hosseini wrote: "If culture was a house, then language was the key to the front door, to all the rooms inside" (temporary Translation: *Nếu văn hóa là một ngôi nhà thì ngôn ngữ là chìa khóa mở ra cánh cửa chính để vào tất cả những căn phòng bên trong*) This comparison shows the close connection between the language and culture of each country, and English and Vietnamese are no exception. Different cultures have elements that one country has, the other doesn't, and vice versa. This is most clearly expressed through idioms and proverbs. Specifically, the sentence *Carry coals to Newcastle*. Newcastle is an area with countless coal mines, so the proverb can translate the meaning into the phrase *Chở củi về rừng* (Take Woods to the Forest) in Vietnamese. In some contexts, the one can also be translated into *Đổ thêm dầu vào lửa* (Adding Oil to a Fire). However, the translator can not find equivalent transliteration for every case; then sometimes we have to interpret appropriately in terms of content, such as the phrase "Bán anh em xa, mua láng giềng gần" (Selling far away brothers, buying close neighbors) can be translated as: "Having no relatives nearby, just depends on people around in need."

In translation, we must always adhere to the principle of faithfulness to the original text, that is, how the author has written the source text, the translator still has to convey precisely that spirit and content. However, the reading culture in Vietnam is also different from that of many other countries or nations, which also causes many difficulties. For example, when translating the exchange conversation of the two inmates, due to their starting point being homeless thieves and robbers, their words could hurt your ears because it is so obscene and foul-mouthed. However, Vietnam, as well as countries with Eastern culture, tend to dislike rude and sensitive words, especially in bookworks. Therefore, when translating, we have to choose flexibly the expressions for these. Respecting the original text does not mean doing translation as a machine adhering to each word of the work (word-by-word translation).

RECEIVING TRANSLATED WORK

Translation, in general, and book translation, in particular, play a significant role in the circulation of book works around the world; it is a bridge to access foreign and international knowledge. Therefore, the receiving translations have their criteria.

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First of all, it is necessary to ensure the accuracy of the whole document with respect to the source text without distorting and preventing the intention of the original document. The translation words must express the correct regional culture. For cultural disagreements, such as source language using sensitive, offensive, or combative words; At this occasion, it is necessary to select synonyms with the equivalent meaning to help readers understand and feel the expression nuance equivalent to the original. The selection of appropriate words in the target language also needs to be guaranteed in order to provide the closest meaningful text to the original one, avoiding the use of a particular word, causing mismatches, content "distortion," or "metamorphosis" for the readers to misunderstand.

Next, it is necessary to have a natural and coherent style, so it is essential to overcome the various characteristics of the expressive culture in order to translate harmoniously for readers to understand quickly and comfortably. In order to achieve this criterion, translators need to understand cultural background appropriately and the nature and characteristics of the source text field. The translation is considered a multi-dimensional activity because the translator has to play both the role of the reader and co-authors. Therefore, the translator is faced with the influence of two-way information reception: the first way is to read the original text in its culture, and the second way is the reception of information that impacts the processing of translation. From understanding the author's idea in the original text to selecting words and expressions in the target language to ensure the complete and correct meaning but not losing the hidden implication, which requires translators to undergo an arduous and lengthy process of learning and cultivating because learning a language is not just learning the words and expression but also learning more about the whole culture where it is used.

CONCLUSION

The translation is a difficult task, requiring translators to work hard on each page of the original text and translated text. The translator must not only be fluent in foreign languages but also understand the history, culture, customs, and practices of the country where their translated language was born. The study of cultural factors in ethnic groups when learning and using foreign languages in general, as well as in the translation process in particular, plays a core role in building foundations, maintaining and developing skills and translation experience so that it can bring out excellent translations, and minimize avoidable errors. However, this process requires quite a lot of time and challenges, depending quite heavily on each field, different language contexts, and social contexts; therefore, more in-depth studies are needed to support learners, translators, and foreign language users. Hopefully, in the near future, there will be more and more scientific research on cultural factors that directly affect translation, in particular, the translation of books so Vietnamese languages and literature are increasingly rich and diverse and become a source of materials for people's knowledge to improve and for readers to entertain.

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