

# A Study of College English Translation Strategies Under the Influence of Eastern and Western Cultural Differences

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## ABSTRACT:

This article takes the differences between Chinese and English as the starting point and conducts specific analysis. It is proposed to pay attention to the differences in the expressions of Chinese and English sentences, the differences in sentence structures, and the differences in logical order when translating college English. The translation strategies are suggested based on these differences.

**Keywords:** *English translation, cultural differences, thinking differences*

## 1. Introduction

Translation is the act of transforming one kind of linguistic information into another. A relatively unfamiliar expression (Language A) is transformed into a relatively familiar expression (Language B). Based on the cultural connotation and thinking mode of Language A, the barrier-free understanding and communication with Language B will be conducted. Therefore, not only the conversion of two language symbols, but also cultural transcoding occurred in the entire translation process. [1] Actually, the two languages represent the different historical backgrounds of the two ethnic groups, and also reflect the different living habits and thinking modes of the two ethnic groups respectively. This fundamental difference is also reflected in cultural differences. Therefore, when translating between Chinese and English, we must take into account the different cultural backgrounds of the two languages and the differences in the way of thinking of the two populations.

## 2. Differences between English and Chinese expressions

### 2.1 Differences between English and Chinese expressions

English sentences are mostly long sentences, while Chinese sentences are short and concise; English sentences are rigorous in structure, the main structures and details are tightly connected, concise, and compact, while Chinese sentences are loosely shaped, and they are often connected by commas. English expressions can be subordinated to combine multiple sentences to elicit a long list of modifiers. The structure of the sentence is complicated and cumbersome. The sentence is usually composed of the main

body of the sentence plus various clauses and side-by-side components. Chinese expression mode pays attention to the logical relationship of sentences and the sequence of events, usually implied by sentence order, connected by meaning, and generally connected sentences by phrases. Sentences are usually composed of several parallel short sentences. This difference is particularly evident in technical English.

### 2.2 Chinese-English Translation Techniques

#### 2.2.1 Sentence segmentation

Chinese sentences are short and have many clauses. When translating between Chinese and English, analyze the sentence structure, and segment Chinese sentences with more clauses according to time changes, subject changes, and semantic transitions, and integrate them into refined English sentences.

Example 1 Ancient people used Chinese knots to record events, and now they are mainly used for decoration.

In ancient times, people used Chinese Knot to record events. But now it is mainly used for decoration.

In Example 1, Chinese sentences have two points in time: ancient and modern. When we do translation, we can perform sentence segmentation at this point in time.

Example 2 Many people like Chinese food. In China, cooking is regarded as an art.

Many people are fond of Chinese cuisine. In China, cooking is regarded as an art.

In Example 2, Chinese sentence appears with two subjects. There is a special subject structure in Chinese--multiple subject structure. The distinguishing feature of this structure is that due to the theme, two subjects appear at the beginning of the sentence. [2] In Chinese-English translation, sentences can be segmented according to the change of subject (in the example, the first subject is "person" and the second subject is "cooking") to make the English expression concise.

### 2.2.2 Sentence conjunction

Chinese culture advocates "understanding" and "mental conception", which is reflected in the form of parataxis on language. Western language philosophy emphasizes the integrity and logic of language forms. The logical relationship between Chinese clauses is often implied in the expression, and the reader needs to figure it out and understand it. The logical relationship between English clauses is explicit. The reader can determine the logical relationship between the upper and lower sentences through the explicit related words in the sentence.

Example 3 Mount Tai is located in the west of Shandong Province. It is more than 1,500 meters above sea level, with an area of about 400 square kilometres.

Mountain Tai, 2,700 m above sea level and 400 square kilometers, which is located in the western part of China.

In Example 3, Chinese sentences are merged together through related words in English to make the overall translation simple and clear. The syntactic structure can avoid language procrastination and repetition, making the translation more rigorous, concise, compact, and consistent with English expression habits.

### 2.3 Differences in sentence structure

Although passive voice exists in both English and Chinese, in contrast, English prefers to use passive voice, especially in some formal written styles, such as scientific English, medical English, and so on. The use of marked passive sentences guided by the word "Bei" in Chinese is not so frequent, and most of them are unmarked passive sentences without the word "Bei". In terms of structural form, the form of passive sentence pattern in English is relatively simple, and its main body is a formal passive sentence or a marked passive sentence, which is composed of "be + transitive verb past participles". [3] In Chinese, unmarked passive sentences are commonly used. When using active-form passive sentences in Chinese, the syntax is more flexible and less restrictive. In English, there are some sentences that show passive signs, such as it is said..., it is reported that.... These conventional usages must consider the language itself, which cannot be simply translated into Chinese passive sentences.

Example 4 Red is seen everywhere during the Spring Festival and other festive occasions.

The color of red can be seen everywhere during the Spring Festival and other joyous occasions.

In Example 4, the unmarked "passive sentence" is used in Chinese. When translating, you should understand the meaning of the sentence and translate it into English passive sentence.

### 2.4 Logical order difference

The Chinese people emphasize historical thinking and intentional thinking. Chinese language is developed according to the chronological order or the logic of the

development of things. However, Westerners pay more attention to logical thinking and cognitive thinking. When they express English, they will put the semantic focus first, and then break down the narrative reasons and conditions.

Example 5 When he was five years old, he developed typhoid fever and became deaf.

He became deaf at five after an attack of typhoid fever.

In Example 5, Chinese expresses the matter completely in chronological order; while English first states the result of the matter.

When Chinese expresses the concepts of time, space, and job size, it is generally developed in order from large to small, and from high to bottom. This is a special logical order that Chinese has. In this respect, English follows the rule from small to large and low to high.

Example 6 we passed by high-rise buildings, and behind the windows, there were 15 million Wuhan people who stayed in the house for several weeks. All this was just to stop the spread of the virus.

And behind every window of these skyscrapers we drove past, there were 15 million people who were staying put in one place for weeks at a time to stop this disease.

The order of description in Chinese is high-rise buildings---windows, from large to small; while the order of description in English is indeed from windows---buildings, from small to large.

## 3. CONCLUSION

Different nations have different historical backgrounds and different ways of thinking, which also determines the cultural differences that they reflect in their understanding of things. Philosophically, China advocates "integration between man and nature" and "harmony", so Chinese culture seeks perfection, completeness, and logical order and time order. In language, it is consistent. There are many subjectless clauses and subject ellipsis; Western philosophy advocates "separation of characters" and advocating individual thinking. In language, they coincide. The differences in culture and thinking require us to consider and understand in depth when translating between two languages. [4] We not only need to understand the correct expression of the target language and the original language, but also communicate the cultural connotations between the two languages.

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