

# Challenges and Responses to the Changes of Translation Part in the CET-6: Adding Chinese Culture-loaded Words and Expressions

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## ABSTRACT

Since the reform of the CET-6 in 2013, a major change has taken place in the type of translation part, shifting from the original single sentence translation to Chinese-English paragraph translation. The subjects and vocabularies are more closely related to Chinese culture. Based on such a change, the paper discussed the main reasons for students' poor performances in the translation of the CET-6, explored the corresponding methods and manifested the significance in the hope of giving some advice on how to achieve better cultural education in college English teaching. One is to update teachers' ideas about translation. The other is to perfect related English teaching materials. Only in this way can college English translation class exert its due role in delivering Chinese culture into the world.

**Keywords:** *Translation part of the CET-6, culture education in college English teaching, delivering Chinese culture.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the second half of 2013, the question type and content have been adjusted in the College English Test-6 (CET-6), among which the biggest change is the translation part, from the original single-sentence translation to paragraph translation. Most of the translation content is involved in all aspects of Chinese culture ranging from the beauty of mountains and rivers, traditional cuisine, Chinese festivals and dynasties to the hot topics of society and the changes of travel methods. Although the difficulty in the grammatical structure or sentence patterns has been reduced, the translation of culture-loaded words and expressions has become increasingly difficult for students. The author believes that the following two aspects are the reasons why students are not satisfied with their translation.

## 2. THE MAIN REASONS FOR STUDENTS' TRANSLATION ERRORS IN THE CET-6

### 2.1. *Unbalanced cultural input—Chinese culture "aphasia"*

Aphasia originated from medical terminology, manifested as varying degrees of listening, speaking, reading and writing dysfunction. The concept of "Chinese cultural aphasia" was proposed by Professor Cong Cong from

Nanjing University. In October 2000, Professor Cong Cong published an article titled "*Chinese Cultural Aphasia: Deficiencies in English Education in China*" in *Guangming Daily*. The article pointed out that "cross-cultural communication cannot be limited to the level of 'cultural understanding', but needs to be extended to the 'cultural sharing' and 'cultural influence' aspects of the communication objects".

The current English culture teaching materials in most colleges and universities are articles written by British and American native writers, and the contents are almost about British and American national culture. Many students rarely have access to the language and texts describing Chinese culture. As a result, students find it hard to express the professional terminology of Chinese culture in English. Without the input of language and culture, how could it possible to have effective output? Translation, as a cross-cultural communication activity, is not only a linguistic transformation between source and target texts, but also a cultural transformation between languages. Hu Chao (2003) once pointed out: "Any successful cross-cultural exchange takes place based on equality between the two sides (especially in psychology). Only by fully understanding and cultivating the country's excellent traditional culture can we demonstrate a magnificent and inclusive cross-cultural personality to the diversity of the genre."

## 2.2. Students lack awareness of differences between English and Chinese structures

Most Chinese is composed of multiple small sentences arranged in parallel according to the time and logic order, interlocking in form and loosening in structure, just like a chain. While in English sentences, the subject-predicate structure is prominent, with a fixed basic sentence pattern, and various phrase and clause structures are added to form a long sentence. The sentences are distinct and have a tree structure.

### 2.2.1. Misusing of parts of speech

The subject of Chinese sentences is very flexible and can be served by nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.; English can only be served by nouns, pronouns or linguistic units with noun grammatical functions (such as infinitive verbs, verb nouns, and noun clauses). For example, there are two versions for the translation of Chinese characters “体现”.

E.g. 大学教育是文明的体现。

University education is the *embodiment* of civilization.

E.g. 汉字体现了中国悠久的历史。

Chinese characters *embody/reflect* a long history in China.

In the two sentences, the functions of “体现” are different, namely, one serves as an object, the other acts as a predicate verb. Students should have the ability to distinguish the slight discrepancy.

E.g. 汉语和西方语言的一个重要区别在于它是方块字而不是以字母构成的。(2019年6月六级题)

A significant difference between Chinese and Western languages is that *Chinese* is made up of characters instead of letters.

The subject of this sentence should be “重要区别”. And the pronoun is not a clear reference. So, we should add *Chinese* to solve the problem in pronoun reference.

### 2.2.2. Misidentification of subject

A number of Chinese sentences have no subjects. In the translation, appropriate subjects should be added based on the principle in English.

E.g. 千百年来,创作了许多诗歌和绘画赞美牡丹。(2019年12月六级题)

For thousands of years, *ancient scholars* have created countless poems and paintings in praise of the peonies.

In this sentence, the subject “*ancient scholars*” is added according to the grammar because there is no subject in this sentence. While some students mistook “千百年来” for the subject of the sentence.

E.g. 中国许多地方的湖泊和池塘都适宜荷花生长。

It can grow in the lakes and ponds in many places across the country.

Most students regarded “湖泊和池塘” as the subject of the sentence. Actually, we’d better make it the adverbial of place. In this way, it can be more consistent with the English writing logic.

### 2.2.3. The application of passive voices and non-finite verb

There are no morphological changes in Chinese verbs. Active voice is usually adopted. While English verbs change with tense, modality and voice, and passive voice is widely used. The subject of some Chinese sentences is not the real action performer. These sentences seem to use active voice, but in fact, the implied meaning is passive.

E.g. 中国许多地方都培育和种植牡丹。(2019年12月六级题)

Peonies are cultivated and planted in many places of China.

“中国许多地方” was mostly regarded as the subject of the sentence. They failed to recognize the actual action performer, naturally, which would lead to an unsatisfactory answer.

E.g. 成语是汉语中的一种独特的表达方式,大多由四个汉字组成。(2019年6月六级题)

Chinese idioms, mostly *comprised of* four characters, are a unique mode of expression in Chinese.

There are two predicate verbs in the original sentence. One is “是……”, the other is “由……构成”. But they share the same subject. We can adopt non-finite verb or attributive clause to make the sentence, that is, “*comprised of*” or “*which are comprised of*”.

## 3. MEASURES SHOULD BE TAKEN IN THE TRANSLATION EDUCATION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

Through the above analysis, the author believes that adding culture-loaded words and expressions in the translation part will exert great influence in the future development of college English culture teaching. The following is some advice on how to better achieve the goal.

### 3.1. To update teachers’ ideas about translation

The adjustment of translation helps college English teachers update their teaching ideas about translation. In the past, teachers often focused on strengthening students’ vocabulary and grammar, but neglecting students’ ability to translate the entire paragraph. The new translation question type has made higher requests for students, including the accurate understanding of the whole text, grasp the logic between the lines of Chinese short sentences, and clearly distinguish the subject-verb relationship. In the previous college English teaching, less attention was paid to some

important links like the consistent tense, the clear reference of pronouns, and the cohesion and coherence.

### **3.2. To perfect related English teaching materials**

The shift of using Chinese cultural paragraphs as an important test content of C-E translation conveys an important message to the current college English teaching. That is, future college English teaching needs students to possess the basic knowledge and skills and know something about the culture of Britain and America. Particularly, students are supposed to know a lot about Chinese culture and correctly translate culture-loaded words and expressions. So, how to strengthen the teaching of Chinese culture in college English teaching? The author believes that it is necessary to perfect related English teaching materials. Since the proportion of reading materials about Chinese culture in current English textbooks is very small, the editors could choose more articles reflecting Chinese society and culture when compiling textbooks. At the same time, relevant Chinese reading content should be added to college English translation teaching, such as some ideas of Confucianism, educational folk tales handed down from ancient China, traditional Chinese festivals and customs, as well as Chinese people's thinking habits and behaviors that can reflect the values of Chinese culture.

In addition, general readers concerning the basic situation of our country should also be included in the category of reading so that students can read more teaching materials in English that reflect Chinese culture. Furthermore, by participating in related activities, students can have access to the differences of various cultures, which can also help establish correct attitude, deepen their understanding and love with Chinese culture, and mobilize the confidence and enthusiasm to spread the excellent Chinese culture in English.

Besides, students are required to pay attention to accumulating vocabularies and expressions related to Chinese culture in learning. For teachers, they should timely update their teaching philosophy, enhance teaching levels and gain a better understanding of Chinese culture. Relevant tasks could be assigned to build up students' confidence and enthusiasm to spread Chinese culture in English. A scientific way could be adopted in the integration of formal language teaching with culture teaching.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

In response to the changes in the CET-6 translation reform, teachers should consciously help students establish a correct view on translation, which means that the qualified translation is not a word-for-word translation in the order of the original text. They should also teach basic knowledge about translation and translation skills. At the same time, they are supposed to optimize the teaching links and set up more relevant Chinese cultural translation teaching activities, so that students can learn relevant vocabularies and expressions, and apply them to their practical use. In order to improve their translation skills, students should actively expand their related knowledge and vocabularies, as well as to conduct more practical translation training.

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