

Analysis of Chinglish in Chinese-English Translation

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Abstract. With the development of globalization, English has been more and more widely used in the countries all over the world. There is an interesting phenomenon called Chinglish appears, which originated from Pidgin in the eighteenth century. In fact, it is not the normative English and it is different from Chinese English. This paper analyzes the reasons why Chinglish exists in Chinese-English translation from different aspects and then shows some examples about the skillful usage of Chinglish in Chinese-English translation. At last, this paper provides some methods to deal with this problem.

I. Introduction

Chinglish originated from Pidgin in the eighteenth century in Guangzhou, when foreigners from England had business cooperation with Chinese people. Then those Chinese people learned some simple English words from those foreigners and combined them with Chinese words, and then Chinglish appeared. It is different from China English, which describes the traditional culture of China in English. It is also called Chinese English and it refers to the kind of nonstandard English that is used by Chinese people when they learn and use English in Chinese way.

II. The reason why CHINGLISH appears in CHINESE-ENGLISH translations

In 2013, there was a hot debate on the internet, which was about a video. In that video, a Chinese journalist interviewed a Zambia officer. What drew people's attention were his Chinese pronunciation and Chinglish questions: What is your view about Five Bricks Countries? How do you see China's development in recently years? How do you see the relationship between China and Zambia in development? The question "how do you see" is Chinese way to ask about other's ideas and it is obvious that the journalist translated the Chinese words one by one into English. We all know that language is closely connected with culture, so if we want to find out the reason why there is Chinglish in Chinese-English translation, we need to compare with the different culture and languages, which also conclude different aspects.

A. Negative transfer caused by mother tongue

When we learn another language, it is inevitable that our mother tongue cause positive transfer and negative transfer. For example, if you are going to do some shopping, it can be translated into "I go to buy something", which is language positive transfer cause we can apply Chinese way to English---the words, the sentence structure and the order of the words. But because we get used to it, there is also language negative transfer, which is just the cause of Chinglish in Chinese- English translation. For example, if you want to remind somebody else to look a tiger over there, it should be translated into "Look! There is a tiger!", while we often mistranslate it into "Look! There has a tiger!", which is the negative transfer caused by our mother language.

B. Cultural differences

We share different religions, locations, modes of thinking and social custom.

For religions, in China, the mainstream religion is Buddhism while westerners believe in God. Therefore, if you want to express the principle, the diligent person will success, it is right to translate it into "God helps those who help themselves", rather than "Buddha helps those who help themselves". We need to take it into consideration when we translate Chinese into English.

With regard to locations, England is surrounded by sea while China is closely connected with land. As a result of it, there are common expressions in Chinese relating to land like “waste money like cast the soil”, however, in English, people will say “spend money like water”. In China, people say “the south of the sky and the north of the sea” to express the huge land area, while in English is “from sea to sea”. In addition, in China the east wind represents the warm spring while the west wind is cold due to Chinese geographical environment. But, in England, that is just the opposite. So that’s why in the poem Ode to the West Wind, it says “Oh the west wind.”

For different modes of thinking, foreigners are very straightforward and open, while Chinese people are reserved and unassertive. Thus when Chinese people express their ideas, they would like to put reasons at first and result at last and others praise them they tend to be very modest. On the contrary, westerners like to put result firstly and they appreciate others’ compliment. When we translate Chinese into English, we should put the result firstly. If others say “Your skirt is very beautiful”, Chinese people always answer “na li na li”. Here we cannot translate into “where, where”, instead of it, the right translation is “It is not beautiful at all”.

In regard of social custom, Chinese people greet others with “Have you eaten?”. However foreigners like to talk about weather as greeting. Chinese people consider dragon is a mascot to China while foreigners think it is a monster with four legs and represents evil. Hence, “give birth to a twin”, it should not be translated into “a baby dragon and a baby phoenix”, instead of it, the right translation is “pigeon pair”. Chinese people and westerners hold different ideas about dog as well, for example, “a lucky dog” express the positive meaning of dog in English while in Chinese, people say “tong da lu shui gou”, this means “to attack somebody already down in his luck”.

III. Specific examples of CHINGLISH in CHINESE-ENGLISH translation

A .Chinglish words

There are five kinds of Chinglish words used by Chinese people, so in the following, I will explain them one by one specifically.

Firstly, Chinese people form the habit of applying Chinese to English mechanically, for example, “take care of yourself” is always translated into “notice your body”, “cousin sister” is improperly translated into “watch sister”.

Secondly, some mistakes about collocations may appear like translate “take medicine” into “eat medicine”, translate “turn on the light” into “open the light” and so on.

Thirdly, due to misuse the unsuitable words, in Chinese, “shui ping” is the same with “level”, consequently to express “Her English is better than me”, in Chinese, it is translated into “Her English level is higher than me”. However the right translation should be “She knows more English than me”.

The fourth one is misusing of the part of speech. For “the aged”, if we say “old people”, it is extremely impolite, but if we use “the senior citizen”, it shows politeness.

Last but not the least, as is known to all, native speakers like to use pronouns or other words to reduce repetition, but in Chinese there are repetitions, so too much repetition can cause Chinglish as well. For example, sometimes we mistakenly translate “to accelerate the pace of economic reform”, and in that sentence, “accelerate” means to speed up the pace, so we should not use “pace”, which leads to repetition.

B. Chinglish sentences

For Chinglish sentences, the common example is “Good good study, day day up”, whose Chinese meaning is “hao hao xue xi, tian tian xiang shang.” There are five categories of Chinglish sentences as showed in the following part.

Firstly, there are some absence of words in Chinese, like the slogan in some important place like the engine room, if we just translate it into “Engine room is serious place”, people will get puzzled about the translation. Therefore, the absent part is “no unauthorized access”, and we should translate it into “Engine room: No unauthorized access.”.

The second one is that we often forget to change the part of speech. An example can be: to emphasize somebody’s speech achieve a good effect, the Chinglish translation is “His speech gave

a deep impression to the audience.”, however we should change the noun “impression” to verb “impress”, therefore the correct translation should be “His speech impressed the audience deeply.”.

Last but not the least, in Chinese, we describe reasons firstly, results at last and we express things from big to small, from far to near, while in English we illustrate results at first and then we talk about causes, in addition, we describe things from small to big, from common to special. Such as “They canceled the outing because of the rain.” instead of “Because of the rain, they canceled the outing.”. And, the right translation of “18:00 tomorrow afternoon” should be “six o’clock tomorrow afternoon”, rather than “tomorrow afternoon six o’clock”.

IV. Methods to deal with the problem

On one hand, some people consider Chinglish is a kind of nonstandard English so we should find solutions to deal with it, while on the other hand, people think we can use it as long as foreigners can understand what we are talking about. And now, with the development of globalization and communication all over the world, we are pleased to see that more and more Chinglish is being accepted by foreigners and some Chinglish words are even written into Cambridge dictionary, and of all, the most famous one is “Long time no see.”

In addition, there is another important problem. Although some words seem to be Chinglish, they can not be replaced by other words, because they describe the special things in China, which is called Chinese English. Like the wine “er guo tou”, we cannot translate it into “small two pots of heads”, the only translation is “Erguotou”, and we can add explanations such as “a kind of traditional Chinese wine”. For Chinese English words which describe Chinese traditional characteristics, we should not translate it mechanically into English words; on the contrary, I hold the opinion that we should keep the Chinese pronunciation. Like “dou fu”, now the right translation is “Tofu”.

A. Read and listen to authentic material as much as possible

In my opinion, because we always read and listen to material provided by Chinese, we get used to Chinese and we learn English in Chinese way. Consequently the best way to avoid Chinglish is to be in touch with English material. The more you read and listen to authentic material, the sooner your language sense will be formed, and the more you will know about the culture of UK. We all know that the language sense for English is very important; when you translate Chinese into English it is very helpful as well. And here we need to pay attention to choose the material which is in accordance with idiomatic English. For example, if we often read the sentence “If I were a bird, I would fly up in the sky.”, so when we need to express my opinion, if I in your position, I will not do this, we can easily translate it into “If I were you, I would not do that.” with the language sense which we have formed.

In addition, imitation is important as well. If we can imitate what we read and listen to, it will do lots of help to our translation. Therefore, more imitation, reading and listening are all needed for flexible translation.

B. Try to use English thinking mode

Due to different religions, locations, history and social custom, when we translate Chinese to English, if we do not use English thinking mode, Chinglish will definitely be caused. As mentioned before, by getting in touch with English authentic material, we can form the English sense and know better about the mode of thinking of native speakers. Thus after that, we can easily use English mode of thinking as much as possible. If we need to express “the shop is not open in weekend”, we should know native speakers like to give results first and reasons next, therefore we ought to translate it into “This shop is closed because of the weekend.”. What we need to pay attention to is that we should try not to translate the Chinese words one by one mechanically.

C. Accumulate more knowledge about grammar and vocabulary

Although in China, we have already spared no effort to study grammar and vocabulary, they are still important and the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary is still needed to be strengthened and further studied because words and grammar are the fundamental parts of language. What need

attention are the meaning of words, collocations of words, part of speech for each word, the differences of the tense of sentences, the order of sentences and last but not the least, the passive voice.

D. Learn more ways of translation

At last, numerous ways of translation are provided and concluded in books about translation. In my opinion, when we need to translate Chinese to English, we can accumulate all kinds of useful methods to help us and use them flexibly into our translation.

V. Summary

An agreement has been reached in academic discussion that Chinese English expresses Chinese specialty, therefore it should be kept. However, Chinglish can not be understood by native speakers and it hinders our communication, thus we should find ways to avoid using it. Throughout the full text, it has provided some methods to deal with the problem of Chinglish, which shows that with the skillful use of Chinglish, translators can translate the unique Chinese culture without affecting the understanding of target readers. But this topic is also expected to be further studied.

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