

Study on the Color Words Translation from the Perspective of Differences between Chinese and English

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Abstract

Color is a kind of perception of the objective world. Whether in nature or in social life, there are all kinds of colors. The so-called "colorful world" and "colorful life" show that people's actual life is closely related to color and people live in colorful world. The cognition of color is one of the most basic categories of human beings. In language and culture, the unique charm of color words is impressive. Due to the differences in cultural customs, geographical location, historical traditions, religious beliefs, national psychology and thinking patterns of each nation, color words sometimes show the unique "personality" of each nation with a obvious cultural stigma. This makes it possible to diversify the translation of color words.

Keywords

Color Words Translation, Culture Differences, Translation Methods.

1. Introduction

Color is a visual effect that occurs through the brain and eye. When people use color words to express the characteristics of objects, they are used to express almost the same meaning. In both English and Chinese languages, color words have rich cultural connotations. It is important to use color words in human's daily life. In different cultures and languages, people have different perceptions of colors and the symbolic meaning of colors. Due to the differences between Chinese and English cultural backgrounds, the same color words have different associative meanings in English and Chinese languages. At the same time, China is separated from most of the English-speaking countries by thousands of miles, and the language systems, cultures and historical backgrounds to which English and Chinese belong are different. People's feelings and expressions of colors are not the same. As a result, the symbolic meaning of colors naturally differs greatly between Chinese and Western cultures. It is necessary to understand the cultural differences between Chinese and English in terms of color words in order to further improve the translation. Below we describe the symbolic meaning of colors in Chinese and Western cultures.

2. The Symbolic Meaning of Colors

2.1. Red

The reason why the Chinese people love the flamboyant red color can be traced back to the ancient times. In ancient times, the worship of the sun and the desire for fire guided the ancestors to transform their reverence for nature and life into the worship of "red". This shows that the Chinese people have a long history of preference for the red, which often reminds Chinese people of happiness, good luck, prosperity, festivity, warmth, and so on. On festive days, red lanterns, red couplets and red "Fu" characters are posted; when men marry women, red "Xi" characters are posted, and the lively and prosperous are called "red fire". For example, the Chinese word for someone who is "red" is translated as "popular" in English. The red color in

Western culture mainly refers to the color of blood, and blood in the Western mind is the "liquid of life" running in the human body. Once the blood is shed, the flower of life will wither. Therefore, the color red reminds Westerners of "violence" and "danger". For example: (1) The red rules of tooth and claw translates as brutality and violent rule, (2) red revenge translates as bloody revenge, (3) a red hands translates as a murderer, (4) in the red means loss money, (5) a red cent means worthless, (6) red tape translates as bureaucratism.

2.2. Yellow

In the 21st century in China, when yellow is mentioned, people often associate it with pornographic videos, books, etc. It has the meaning of dirty and obscene. However, yellow is one of the noblest colors in traditional Chinese culture, and is the "color of the emperor". The ancestors created the ideogram "Huang" from the words "Tian" and "Guang". "Tian" means yellow land. "Guang" means sunlight. The sun shines yellow on the ground, so the earliest yellow color is the color that nourishes the Chinese people and the sunlight is the color that gives heat and energy to humans. This reflects the ancient worship of the gods of the earth. It originated from the ancient doctrine of the five elements of Yin and Yang. Yellow is the color of honor in Chinese feudal society, symbolizing imperial power, splendor and sublimity. To this day, yellow is still the symbol of ancient China.

But in Western culture, the Jews who betrayed Jesus wore yellow, so yellow in English often has the meaning of contemptible, despicable, nasty, and cowardly. "He is a yellow dog" means "He is a mean person"; "He is too yellow to tell the truth" means "He is too timid to tell the truth". Thus it can be seen that these yellows are not directly related to color.

2.3. Blue

Chinese people love blue which is the natural color of the sea and sky, and often associate blue with beautiful reverie and longing, so blue in Chinese culture gives people the association of "tranquil and serene, far-reaching and refreshing", such as "blue dream", which means a wonderful dream or dreaming of something. In Western culture, blue is a symbol of nobility, purity, sanity and courage, so "He is blue blooded" means he comes from a noble and famous family, not that his blood is blue; "blue man" represents a man of courage, refers to a policeman; "blue stockings" was something worn by talented women in the 18th century, now it is a symbolic term for talented women. In a way, the blue here is equivalent to the "Huang" in Chinese. But Blue often symbolizes sadness, unhappiness or melancholy in emotional expression, so "I am feeling rather blue today" means I am in a bad mood today. Often, blue means the same as "Huang", which means dirty, obscene, and in English, "blue film" does not translate to blue movie, but pornographic movie.

3. The Translation of Colors

Color words carry their own unique symbolism and meaning in certain contexts. Therefore, understanding the cultural differences between Chinese and English color words is particularly important and a necessary step for translators. Both foreignization and domestication are common in the translation of color words. However, not all sentences are suitable for the foreignization, and the translation method is especially important to translators. The over pursuit of domestication or the over pursuit of foreignization can have great negative effects. In the process of translation, translators should integrate the two translation methods of to avoid the loss of the original culture and to promote the export and exchange of culture. Whether adopting the foreignization or the domestication, translators should choose the best balance point.

Original text: 紫府无双者也。

Translation: No peer in fairyland, no equal in the purple courts of heaven.

Original text: This wealthy young man likes nothing better than to have fun in the red light district.

Translation: 这个豪门公子最喜欢在红灯区(一个以卖淫为主的地区)寻欢作乐。

Original text: 日出江花红胜火，春来江水绿如蓝。

Translation: At sunrise riverside flowers redder than fire, in spring green waves grow as blue as sapphire.

The last example is from a poem by Bai Juyi. In the poem, metaphor is used to describe the redness of the flowers and the greenness of the river water. The flowers, illuminated by the sun, are redder than the blazing fire; the turquoise river water is greener than the blue grass. The spring under the poet's pen is so gorgeous, colorful and vibrant. Of course, in Western culture, green also has the symbolic meaning of life, youth and vitality, for example, in Byron's verse "Vernal breezes green the Thames with a kiss". Therefore, when Chinese and English color words match in literal meaning, emotional color and associative meaning, translators should use the literal translation.

4. Conclusion

Color words as a symbolic system have different uses, cultural values and meanings in both English and Chinese languages. This requires us to understand the cultural traditions, values and customs of the countries where the language is spoken and produced, including many subtle and specific symbolic meanings and the cultural messages they carry. When translating these color words, it is important to clarify their actual meanings and to understand the cultural background of the foreign country. We should study the origin of color words, especially color phrases, and the deep cultural meanings they imply, otherwise the meaning of the sentence will be misinterpreted and the meaning of the color words will be lost.

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