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"Translation and International Communication" vs. Translation: A Conceptual Distinction

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of globalization and the continued advancement of China's "going global" cultural strategy, the scope and connotation of translation studies are undergoing profound changes. In the traditional sense, translation primarily refers to the transformation between languages and the accurate transmission of meaning. By contrast, "translation and international communication" extends this function to serve broader purposes, including cross-cultural exchange, national image construction, and the competition for international discourse power. This paper first reviews the basic concept and conventional functions of translation, and then explains the background and connotation of "translation and international communication." It proceeds to compare the two from five dimensions: communicative purpose, audience orientation, strategy selection, interdisciplinary engagement, and evaluation criteria. Based on this analysis, the paper argues that while the two are closely related, they differ significantly in terms of functional orientation and disciplinary boundaries. Translation serves as the foundation of international communication, whereas translation oriented toward international communication represents a new trend in the development of translation practice. This trend requires translators to go beyond linguistic competence and develop stronger awareness of cross-cultural communication as well as interdisciplinary literacy.

Keywords

Translation; International Communication; Communicative Effect; Cross-Cultural Communication; Translator'S Role

Introduction

Translation has long served as an important means of cross-cultural communication. Yan Fu's principle of "faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance," proposed in his translation of Evolution and Ethics, established a value orientation for Chinese translation thought (Xu and Li 2006). In the Western tradition, Nida's theory of functional equivalence, Newmark's distinction between semantic and communicative translation, and Vermeer's Skopos theory have further enriched the theoretical landscape of translation studies. From a traditional perspective, the core

of translation lies in the transformation of linguistic meaning, that is, the accurate transfer of information and style from the source language into the target language.

However, with China's rising international status and the acceleration of globalization, the function of translation has gone far beyond a purely linguistic activity. In the context of international communication, translation is not only a means of information transfer, but also an important tool for cultural dissemination, national image construction, and competition for international discourse power (Yin and Li 2025). As noted by Huang Youyi (Chen 2024), "translation is not only a linguistic act, but also a political and cultural act." Against this background, the concept of "translation and international communication" has gradually emerged as a new topic of academic concern.

This paper aims to clarify the distinctions and connections between "translation" and "translation and international communication." Methodologically, it first defines the basic connotations of the two concepts, and then conducts a comparative analysis from five dimensions: purpose, audience, strategy, disciplinary orientation, and evaluation criteria. On this basis, it offers further reflections.

1. The Basic Connotation and Traditional Functions of Translation

1.1. Definition and Task of Translation

The primary function of translation is cross-linguistic transmission of information. According to Nida, the aim of translation is to produce "a response in the target audience that is substantially equivalent to that of the source audience." Newmark distinguishes between semantic and communicative translation, emphasizing the unity of meaning and communicative function. In Chinese scholarship, the principle of "faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance" remains a widely accepted standard (Song 2024), requiring accuracy, naturalness, and stylistic quality.

1.2. Functional Orientation of Translation

Historically, translation has functioned both as a medium of civilizational exchange and as a tool for knowledge dissemination. Examples include the translation of Buddhist scriptures, the introduction of Western learning during the Enlightenment period, and contemporary literary and scientific translation. Its traditional functions mainly include the reproduction of textual meaning, the transmission of knowledge systems, and the promotion of cross-cultural understanding.

1.3. Limitations of Traditional Translation

However, from a broader communicative perspective, traditional translation has certain limitations. On the one hand, it may achieve linguistic accuracy but fail to engage the target audience. On the other hand, it tends to focus on textual equivalence while neglecting the communicative environment and the audience's cultural psychology. These limitations provide the practical context for the

emergence of "translation and international communication."

2. The Emergence and Connotation of "Translation and International Communication"

2.1. Background

In the 21st century, with the implementation of China's "going global" strategy and the advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative, translation has increasingly been integrated into national communication and diplomatic systems. In the context of intensified global discourse competition, translation plays a key role in enhancing China's international voice and shaping its national image.

2.2. Basic Connotation

"Translation and international communication" differs from translation in a narrow sense. It emphasizes translation as part of a broader chain of cross-cultural communication and requires it to serve communicative goals and outcomes (Cao 2023). It is not only a linguistic activity, but also a cultural and political one. Specifically, it requires translators to adjust strategies according to the cultural background and reception habits of target audiences; it prioritizes communicative effectiveness over formal equivalence; and it is closely connected with disciplines such as media studies, communication studies, and international relations.

2.3. Relation to Traditional Translation

"Translation and international communication" does not negate traditional translation, but builds upon it. Translation ensures the reliability of the "linguistic bridge," while communication-oriented translation ensures that the bridge leads to meaningful engagement on the other side.

3. A Comparative Analysis

3.1. Purpose

Translation focuses on equivalence in meaning and pursues accuracy and fluency.
Translation and international communication emphasizes communicative goals, such as shaping national image and enhancing cultural identity.

3.2. Audience

Translation is often directed at a general or specialized readership.
Translation and international communication targets specific cross-cultural audiences and requires audience analysis.

3.3. Strategies

Translation mainly operates within the text, including lexical and syntactic choices.
Translation and international communication also involves extra-textual strategies, such as paratexts and transcreation (Marie 2013).

3.4. Disciplinary Orientation

Translation is rooted in linguistics and literary studies.

Translation and international communication integrates communication studies, media studies, and public diplomacy.

3.5. Evaluation Criteria

Translation is assessed in terms of accuracy, fluency, and style.

Translation and international communication also considers communicative effectiveness, such as audience reception and media impact.

Overall, translation focuses on linguistic equivalence, while translation and international communication prioritizes communicative effectiveness.

4. Personal Reflections

In my view, translation is the foundation of international communication, while communication-oriented translation represents its extension.

First, translation moves from "accuracy" to "effectiveness." Translators must consider not only correctness but also acceptability.

Second, the integration of translation and communication reshapes the translator's role. Translators act as cultural interpreters and communication agents (Wang 2021).

Third, this development expands the scope of translation studies and calls for interdisciplinary training.

In short, translation explains meaning, while translation and international communication aims to achieve resonance.

5. Future Prospects

Future developments may include deeper interdisciplinary integration, increased digitalization, stronger emphasis on cultural expression, transformation of translator roles, and closer alignment between research and social needs. Translation studies will evolve toward a more comprehensive and practice-oriented discipline.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, translation and "translation and international communication" are closely related but significantly different. Translation focuses on linguistic equivalence and serves as the foundation of cross-cultural communication. In contrast, translation and international communication emphasizes communicative effectiveness and cultural identification, representing a new trend in the development of translation.

Their differences lie in purpose, audience, strategy, disciplinary orientation, and evaluation criteria. In the contemporary context, translation should go beyond

linguistic accuracy and engage with broader communicative goals. Translators need to balance traditional values with modern communicative demands and develop interdisciplinary competence.

Therefore, "translation and international communication" should not be understood as a simple combination of translation and communication, but as an upgraded paradigm that requires translators to adopt a broader perspective and contribute to the global dissemination of Chinese culture.

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