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Translation of Culture-specific Words in the Chinese-English Dictionary for Foreign Learners

外向型汉英词典中文化局限词的翻译

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Synopsis

Chinese is becoming more and more popular among foreign learners of Chinese. However, as important tools for foreign learners, existing Chinese-English dictionaries fall short of productive and receptive needs of foreign learners in terms of the translation of culture-specific words. This thesis is an attempt to find problems with the translation of such words and ways to improve the translation of them in the Chinese-English dictionary for foreign learners. A word may have the following meanings, namely, conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, affective meaning, rhetorical meaning, stylistic meaning, pragmatic meaning, grammatical meaning and collocative meaning. Some meanings tend to be culture-specific. Therefore, a culture-specific word in the present thesis refers to a lexical unit that has at least one type of culture-specific meaning. The most important duty of bilingual lexicographers is to find in the target language lexical units that are equivalent to the lexical units of the source language, and to coordinate them. Culture-specific words pose a thorny problem for bilingual lexicographers because no equivalents can be found in the target language for them. Usually, translation methods like transliteration, literal translation, free translation, approximate translation, and descriptive translation are used to translate culture-specific words. Besides, supplementary measures like glosses, pictorial illustrations, illustrative examples, usage labels, cultural notes, usage notes, and cross references can be adopted to convey the meaning of those words in bilingual dictionaries.

Existing Chinese-English dictionaries are found to have the following types of problems concerning the translation of culture-specific words: (1) lack of equivalent or inadequate equivalents; (2) lack of glosses where needed; (3) insufficient cultural background information; (4) insufficient usage labels; (5) insufficient usage notes; (6) lack of pictorial illustrations; (7) insufficient illustrative examples; (8) lack of cross

references; and (9) improper language of general direction.

In order to solve the problems in the translation of culture-specific words, the present author proposes that the following be done by the lexicographer-translator: (1) try their best to create equivalents for culture-specific words; (2) add glosses to the newly created equivalents; (3) provide cultural background information for words that have rich connotative meaning and words of allusions; (4) provide detailed usage labels; (5) provide usage notes for words with a heavy load of culture-specific pragmatic meaning; (6) increase the use of illustrative examples; (7) provide pictorial illustrations, cross references; and (8) give directions in all the notes, labels and glosses in English.

Key Words: Chinese-English Dictionary; Culture-specific Words; Translation

摘 要

目前，越来越多的外国人开始学习汉语。但是作为外国人学习汉语的重要工具，现存的汉英词典在文化局限词的翻译方面却不能满足外国学习者的语言产出和求解需要。一个词汇单位可能具有以下意义：概念意义，内涵意义，情感意义，修辞意义，文体意义，语用意义，语法意义，搭配意义。在这些意义中，某些词汇的一些意义是一种文化所特有的，在另外一种文化的语言中则表现为语义空缺。这种具有至少一种文化特有词汇意义的词汇单位就是本文所指的文化局限词。双语词典编纂者最重要的任务是为一种语言的词汇单位在另外一种语言中找出对应词，因而文化局限词成为双语词典翻译的难点。文化局限词的常见翻译方法有音译法、直译法、意译法、近似翻译法、解释性翻译法以及文化替代法。同时，为弥补这些翻译法带来的语义缺失，词典编纂者还会采用注释、插图、例证、文化注释、用法标注、语用说明和参见系统等辅助措施。本文研究了五本汉英词典中文化局限词的翻译，指出这些词典在文化局限词的翻译上主要存在以下问题：（1）缺乏对应词或所提供的对应词有所不足；（2）没有给需要注释的对应词添加注释；（3）相关文化背景信息不足；（4）用法标注不足；（5）相关语用信息不足；（6）缺少例证；（7）无插图；（8）无参见系统；（9）词条中用于说明的语言不恰当。针对这些问题，本文提出了相应的解决方法：（1）尽可能提供可插入性对应词；（2）对于使用者理解有困难的对应词应该提供英语注释；（3）对于文化内涵意义浓厚的文化局限词以及典故等应该提供文化注释；（4）提供详细的用法标注；（5）对于语用意义深厚的文化局限词应添加语用注释；（6）增加例证；（7）提供插图和参见系统；（8）所有的注释、标注应该使用英语。

关键词：汉英词典；文化局限词；翻译

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