CULTURAL FACTORS IN ENGLISH TO CHINESE TRANSLATION

Language and language symbol serve as the carrier of culture. Culture is so penetrative that cultural factors can be seen in all aspects of language. For surface culture, it involves cultural terms, characteristics of things, rhetorical method, general cultural behavior and activities, body languages and etc.. For deep culture, it involves long social history of cultural encyclopedia.

Manifestation of target-language-orientedness and source-language-orientedness

In English to Chinese translation, Target-language-orientedness or domestication is firstly demonstrated in syntactical structure according to Chinese diction and syntax.

For example, Behind the mountain, the sun set. Secondly, translation of culture-specific expressions, such as sayings, idiom, allusion, should be use the method of target-language-orientedness. For example, in the kingdom of blind men the one-eyed man is king.

Sometimes, the source language has no cultural factors, but its target language with strong color of national culture. It is also an example of target-language-orientedness.

For example, spring, the sweet spring is the year’s pleasant king; curiosity enough, he prophesied with oracular accuracy to the
amazement of all.

Right attitude and method to survey cultural factors of source language

In view of translation history worldwide, the translation strategy of target-language-orientedness is historic. It is the historical inevitability to use this strategy so as to introduce exotic culture as soon as possible or to convey the main message of source language when there is cultural barrier.

With the time goes on, there was a distinct change in ideal of culture and translation. More and more scholar advocate the translation strategy of source-language-orientedness. In our translation practice, the following should be taken into consideration.

Firstly, we should admit the characteristics and specialties of different culture. Because there is huge difference between English and Chinese culture or western and oriental culture, when translating cultural expressions, it is actually very difficult to be loyal to cultural image while accurately convey figure of speech, pragmatic meaning.

Therefore, source-language-orientedness should be the dominant translation strategy though, there is no translation can be total-source-language-orientedness. For cultural communication, which methods should be adopted depends on the specific cases.

Secondly, translation is using another language to express idea and artistic style of the source, is a creative thinking of translators, so the language characteristics and cultural awareness of translators are inevitably seen in the translation.

Some translator propose to express creatively, take advantage of target
language and follow the habit of readers, under such guideline, target-language-orientedness will be inevitably seen in the translation.

Both translation strategies have their merits; the right way is to follow the principle of “harmony with diversity”. For maintaining the representative difference of the source language, we should use the method of literal translation.

When source-language-orientedness may cause misunderstanding by readers, it is best to use the strategy of target-language-orientedness to express the deep meaning.