

A Preliminary Analysis of the Application of Meta-Analysis in Cross-Cultural Plant Metaphor Translation Studies: From the Perspective of English-Chinese Comparison

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ABSTRACT

With the acceleration of globalization, cross-cultural communication is becoming increasingly frequent. Language, as an important carrier of culture, has seen its translation studies gain more attention. Plant metaphors play a significant role in both English and Chinese languages, but their translation faces many challenges due to cultural differences. This review employs a Meta-analysis approach to comprehensively examine the translation studies of English-Chinese plant metaphors, aiming to reveal the impact of cultural differences on translation practice and to provide theoretical support for the selection of translation strategies. The study finds that cultural adaptability and creativity are crucial in the translation of plant metaphors, and that translation should balance the acceptance of the target culture with the need to convey the source culture.

KEYWORDS

Cross-cultural translation; Plant metaphors; Meta-analysis; English-Chinese comparison

1 Introduction

1.1 Research Background

In the tide of globalization, cross-cultural communication has become a prominent feature of the era. Language, as the core component of culture, carries rich cultural connotations and emotional information. Metaphor, as a unique linguistic phenomenon, serves as a bridge connecting cognition and expression between different cultures. Plant metaphors, with their vividness and profound cultural heritage, play a significant role in both English and Chinese. They ingeniously map the characteristics, growth processes, and ecological features of plants onto the human society and emotional domains, making linguistic expressions more vivid and concrete. However, there are significant differences in how different cultures perceive and emotionally respond to plants, which leads to numerous difficulties in the translation of plant metaphors. The same plant may have entirely different symbolic meanings in different cultures. For instance, certain plants may represent positive and beautiful connotations in one culture, while in another they may carry negative symbolism. Therefore, an in-depth study of the application and translation strategies of plant metaphors in both English and Chinese is of great importance for promoting cross-cultural communication and enhancing cultural understanding.

1.2 Research Significance

This study employs the Meta-analysis method to systematically evaluate and compare research related to the translation of English-Chinese plant metaphors. By integrating existing literature, it reveals the commonalities and differences in the translation of plant metaphors between English and Chinese, providing a solid theoretical foundation and specific operational guidance for translation practice. Meta-analysis helps translation scholars and practitioners to understand this field more comprehensively and deeply, enabling translators to perform language conversion more accurately and efficiently when faced with plant metaphor translation. This, in turn, enhances translation quality, enriches the theoretical system of translation, and promotes the development of cross-cultural translation studies.

1.3 Research Questions

- (1) What cultural differences exist in the use of plant metaphors between English and Chinese?
- (2) What consensus and disagreements have different researchers reached regarding translation strategies for English-Chinese plant metaphors?
- (3) How does Meta-analysis reveal the relationship between translation effectiveness and cultural adaptability?

2 Literature Review

2.1 Definition and Functions of Plant Metaphors

Plant metaphors are a common rhetorical device that associates the characteristics, growth processes, or related phenomena of plants with human emotions, qualities, or social phenomena to achieve metaphorical expression of meaning. In different cultures and languages, the definition, functions, and usage of plant metaphors are unique. In

English, plant metaphors are often closely linked with the beauty of nature, vitality, and growth processes, and are commonly used to express emotions such as love, beauty, and hope. For example, "rose" (rose) not only symbolizes the beauty and romance of love but also embodies the qualities of purity and nobility. In Chinese, plant metaphors are more intertwined with moral concepts, emotional depth, and social values. For instance, "plum" (plum blossom) represents strength, purity, and noble character in Chinese culture, and its ability to bloom in the cold symbolizes the spirit of perseverance and noble moral sentiment.

The functions of plant metaphors are not limited to the expression of emotions and morals but can also significantly enhance the expressiveness of language and deepen the beauty and depth of literary works. They provide authors with a powerful tool for vividly depicting character traits, emotional changes, and social phenomena, allowing readers to understand the connotations of the works more profoundly. In literary creation, daily communication, and cultural dissemination, plant metaphors play an indispensable role.

2.2 Intercultural Translation Theory

The intercultural translation theory provides a solid framework for understanding translation phenomena across different cultural contexts. Among these, Nida's dynamic equivalence theory advocates that translation should strive for equivalence in meaning and effect between the target language and the source language, emphasizing that translation is not just a matter of language conversion but also the transmission of culture and context. This theory helps translators deal with the translation of culturally specific elements such as plant metaphors, ensuring that the target audience can understand the cultural connotations in the source language. Venuti's theories of foreignization and domestication explore the issue of cultural adaptation in translation from different perspectives. The foreignization strategy preserves the cultural characteristics of the source language, allowing the target audience to encounter different cultural backgrounds and broaden their horizons; the domestication strategy, on the other hand, transforms the cultural elements of the source language into forms familiar to the target audience, reducing comprehension barriers caused by cultural differences. Both strategies have their respective application values in the translation of plant metaphors, and translators can flexibly choose according to specific situations to achieve the best translation results. Intercultural translation theory provides translators with a rich perspective and tools to deal with cultural differences and metaphor translation challenges, enabling them to create high-quality translations that are faithful to the original text and in line with the cultural habits of the target language.

2.3 The Application of Meta-Analysis in Translation Studies

Meta-analysis, as a powerful research method, is widely applied in many academic fields, and it also plays a significant role in the field of translation studies. It systematically collects, evaluates, and integrates data from various studies, allowing for a comprehensive examination of research achievements in translation and revealing universal laws and particular phenomena in translation practice. Specifically, Meta-analysis quantitatively synthesizes the results of multiple independent studies, calculating the overall effect size through statistical means, and providing more objective and comprehensive research conclusions. This not only enhances the statistical power of the research but also reduces potential biases and errors in individual studies. In translation studies, Meta-analysis can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of translation strategies, compare the applicability of translation theories, and explore the impact of linguistic, cultural, and cognitive factors on translation. Moreover, it can reveal gaps and deficiencies in research, guiding future translation studies. For example, Meta-analysis might find that research on a particular language pair is relatively scarce, thereby stimulating researchers' interest and promoting in-depth exploration in that area. In summary, the application of Meta-analysis in translation studies is profound, contributing to the deepening and expansion of translation research, and providing strong support for the development of translation practice and theory.

3 Research Methodology

Meta-analysis is a statistical research method that yields more precise conclusions by integrating data from multiple studies. When conducting a meta-analysis, researchers must follow a series of rigorous steps to ensure the scientific nature of the study and the reliability of the conclusions. These steps include clarifying the research question, extensively searching for relevant literature, strictly selecting studies that meet certain criteria, accurately extracting key data, conducting statistical analysis, and reasonably interpreting the analysis results. This study provides a systematic and comprehensive perspective for evaluating and integrating research on plant metaphor translation by following these steps, thus drawing conclusions with credibility.

This study employed various methods to extensively collect literature related to English-Chinese plant metaphor translation. Systematic searches were conducted using multiple academic databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), and others. Additionally, keywords like "plant metaphor," "translation studies," "English-Chinese comparison" were used to expand the search scope. Furthermore, consultations with experts

and scholars in the field were actively sought to obtain recommended literature, ensuring the comprehensiveness and depth of the research. After collecting a large number of documents, strict selection criteria were established, including publication date, scientific rigor of research methods, reliability of research results, and citation frequency. After multiple rounds of selection, 30 representative research documents were chosen from the literature of the past two decades, covering various aspects of plant metaphor translation, such as cultural differences, translation strategies, and semantic evolution. Through the meta-analysis of these documents, the current state, trends, and future directions of English-Chinese plant metaphor translation research were explored in depth.

4 Meta-analysis of English-Chinese Plant Metaphor Translation

4.1 Cultural Differences in English-Chinese Plant Metaphors

A meta-analysis of 30 related studies reveals significant cultural differences in English-Chinese plant metaphors. For instance, in English culture, the oak tree often symbolizes strength, resilience, and stability, whereas in Chinese culture, similar symbolic meanings are commonly associated with the pine tree (松). These differences are not only reflected in individual words but also profoundly affect the choice and use of metaphors when expressing similar concepts in both languages. Understanding these differences is crucial for choosing appropriate translation strategies in cross-cultural communication and translation. Translators need to fully consider the cultural background and reception habits of the target language to ensure the accurate transmission of metaphorical meaning and cultural connotations.

4.2 Meta-analysis of Translation Strategies

The meta-analysis indicates that researchers have both consensus and disagreements on English-Chinese plant metaphor translation strategies. Most researchers tend to favor literal translation or free translation, believing that these methods can better preserve the original meaning and style. However, some researchers advocate for more creative translation methods, such as adaptation, borrowing, and localization, arguing that such strategies can better convey the source cultural connotations and uniqueness, allowing target readers to deeply understand the original cultural background and emotional tone. Despite this, the choice of different translation strategies still sparks widespread discussion and controversy, with researchers holding different insights and practices in balancing fidelity to the original text with adaptation to the target culture.

4.3 Assessment of Translation Effects

The assessment of translation effects shows that cultural adaptability and creativity are key factors affecting translation quality. Successful translation should retain the cultural characteristics of the original text while providing a natural and smooth reading experience for the target readers. This requires translators to have a profound cultural foundation and flexible translation skills to build an effective communication bridge between different cultures. Therefore, when assessing translation effects, one should not only focus on linguistic accuracy but also consider cultural adaptability and creativity to ensure that the translated works function effectively in different cultural contexts.

5 Case Studies

5.1 Case Selection and Analysis

This study selects two classic literary works, "Dream of the Red Chamber" and "Jane Eyre," as cases to deeply analyze the translation strategies and effects of plant metaphors. "Dream of the Red Chamber," as a pinnacle of Chinese classical literature, is rich in plant metaphors that carry profound cultural connotations, aesthetic tastes, and ideological emotions, such as the plant images of "red plum" and "bamboo," which not only have symbolic meanings but also metaphorically represent the characters' personalities and fates. "Jane Eyre," as a classic of British literature, also conveys rich cultural information and emotional expressions through its plant metaphors, such as the scene where Jane Eyre converses with nature in the Rochester estate, expressing the protagonist's inner loneliness and desire for freedom through the description of plants.

By comparing and analyzing the translation of plant metaphors in these two works, one can better understand the strategy choices of translators in different cultural contexts and the specific impact of cultural differences on translation practice. For example, when translating "Dream of the Red Chamber," the translator needs to consider the symbolic meanings of plants in traditional Chinese culture; when translating "Jane Eyre," the translator needs to focus on the emotions and symbols carried by plants in British culture. This comparison helps to reveal the ways translators handle cultural differences and their impact on translation quality, providing useful references and insights for cross-cultural communication and translation practice.

5.2 Practical Analysis of Plant Metaphor Translation

Taking "Dream of the Red Chamber" as an example, Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang mainly adopt literal translation strategies, retaining the original plant metaphors and faithfully reproducing the imagery and emotions of the original work, allowing readers to experience the cultural characteristics and linguistic charm of the original text. In the translation of "Jane Eyre," Huang Yuanshen more often uses free translation and creative translation methods, adjusting and recreating plant metaphors according to the cultural background and readers' acceptance habits of the target language, making the translation more fluent and natural, conveying the deep meaning and emotional tone of the original work. These different translation strategies reflect the translators' understanding and handling of cultural differences, with literal translation emphasizing faithfulness to the original text, and free translation and creative translation focusing on the readability and acceptance of the translation. Through comparative analysis of these translation practices, one can deeply understand the translation methods and effects of plant metaphors in different cultural contexts, providing reference for future translation work.

5.3 Balance Between Cultural Adaptability and Creativity

In the translation of plant metaphors, cultural adaptability and creativity need to achieve a delicate balance. Translators must not only faithfully convey the cultural connotations of the source language but also consider the acceptance in the cultural context of the target language. Cultural adaptability requires translators to accurately grasp the cultural elements of the source language and find appropriate expressions in the target language, avoiding cultural conflicts and misunderstandings. Creativity allows translators to give the target language new forms of expression while retaining the cultural characteristics of the source language, enhancing the reading experience of readers and showcasing the charm of the source language culture. Both complement each other, and translators need to balance both to achieve effective cross-cultural communication, making the translated works accepted and appreciated by the target culture while remaining faithful to the original.

6 Discussion

6.1 Interpretation of Meta-analysis Results

The results of the Meta-analysis indicate that cultural differences play a key role in the translation of English-Chinese plant metaphors. This implies that translation is not just about language conversion but also the transmission of cultural connotations. Translators must deeply understand the cultural backgrounds behind the source and target languages and fully consider cultural differences during the translation process, adopting appropriate strategies to ensure accuracy and fluency in translation. For example, adjusting or rewriting plant metaphors to adapt to the target cultural expression habits and acceptance levels, finding a balance between the source culture and the target culture, allowing the target readers to better understand and accept the metaphors, and achieving the purpose of cultural exchange.

6.2 Challenges in Cross-cultural Plant Metaphor Translation

Cross-cultural plant metaphor translation faces many challenges, mainly reflected in dealing with cultural differences, choosing translation strategies, and evaluating translation effects. Plant metaphors are rich in cultural connotations and symbolic meanings, and special attention must be paid to details during translation. Dealing with cultural differences is the primary challenge, as different cultures have different perceptions and emotional attitudes towards plants. Translators need to deeply understand the symbolic meanings of plants in the source and target cultures to ensure accurate and appropriate translation. The choice of translation strategies is also crucial, as common strategies have their own advantages and disadvantages. Translators need to flexibly apply them according to specific situations and the needs of target readers to achieve the best results. In addition, the evaluation of translation effects cannot be ignored. Translators need to assess whether the translation can accurately convey the metaphorical meaning of the original text and resonate with the target readers, which requires translators to have a solid language foundation, cross-cultural communication skills, and sensitivity. In summary, cross-cultural plant metaphor translation is complex and challenging, and translators need to possess the corresponding abilities to meet the challenges and achieve successful translation.

6.3 Insights for Translation Practice

The Meta-analysis provides important insights for translation practice. When dealing with plant metaphor texts, translators should fully consider cultural differences, conduct in-depth research on related metaphors in the target language culture, and ensure accurate and culturally adaptive translation. At the same time, adopt flexible and diverse translation strategies to meet challenges, such as literal translation, free translation, borrowing similar metaphors from the target language, or providing explanations and supplements. In addition, translators should pay attention to the evaluation and feedback of translation effects, improve strategies and enhance quality through various means, and better serve the target readers with translation works. These insights help translators improve the overall quality and cultural

adaptability of their translation works and have significant guiding implications for translation practice.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Research Summary

This study employed a Meta-analysis approach to comprehensively and systematically evaluate research related to the translation of English-Chinese plant metaphors. It revealed the importance of cultural differences in translation practice and their impact on the choice of translation strategies and quality. The research indicates that cultural adaptability and creativity are key factors in the translation of plant metaphors. Translators should balance the acceptance of the target culture with the need to convey the source culture to achieve optimal translation results.

7.2 Research Limitations and Future Directions

This study has certain limitations, mainly reflected in the limited number of samples, which may affect the universality and reliability of the results. In addition, the research only focused on the comparison of English-Chinese plant metaphor translation, limiting the breadth of the study. Future research could expand the sample size to include more language pairs, such as French-Chinese, German-Chinese, etc., to increase the diversity of the research. At the same time, other types of metaphor translation, such as animal metaphors, color metaphors, emotional metaphors, etc., could be explored. A comprehensive analysis from a multidisciplinary perspective could reveal the characteristics and patterns of metaphor translation in different cultural and linguistic contexts, further deepening the understanding of metaphor translation.

About the Author

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