

Research on the Interaction between Language and Culture in International Chinese Literature

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ABSTRACT

With the in-depth development of globalization, international Chinese literature has gradually become an important bridge for cross-cultural communication. This paper aims to explore the interaction between language and culture in international Chinese literature, analyze how language carries cultural information and how culture influences language expression. By comparing Chinese literature works under different cultural backgrounds, this paper reveals the complex relationship between language and culture, providing theoretical support for promoting cross-cultural understanding and communication.

KEYWORDS

International Chinese Literature; Language Interaction; Cultural Interaction; Cross-Cultural Communication; Language as a Carrier; Cultural Influence

As a special literary form, international Chinese literature not only reflects the linguistic features of the Chinese language but also embodies the cultural connotations under different cultural backgrounds. Language is the carrier of culture, and culture is expressed and inherited through language (Zhu, S. T. 2021). Therefore, researching the interaction between language and culture in international Chinese literature is of great significance for understanding the essence of cross-cultural communication. This paper will discuss from three aspects: language carrying culture, culture influencing language expression, and the interaction between language and culture in cross-cultural communication.

1 Language Carrying Culture

1.1 Language as the Carrier of Cultural Symbols

In international Chinese literature, language plays a crucial role as the carrier of cultural symbols. The Chinese vocabulary is rich and diverse, and many words contain specific cultural implications. For example, the word "dragon" symbolizes auspiciousness, authority, and power in Chinese culture. It is an important symbol of the unique culture of the Chinese nation and frequently appears in various literary works, conveying profound cultural connotations and becoming a remarkable cultural symbol in cross-cultural communication. The rules of Chinese grammar also reflect cultural characteristics. For instance, in Chinese, grammatical meanings are expressed through word order and function words. This unique grammatical structure reflects the characteristics of Chinese culture that emphasizes order and logical relationships. In literary works, the organization and arrangement of sentences convey the unique thinking mode of Eastern culture. Rhetorical devices are vivid

manifestations of cultural symbols. For example, in the metaphor "Pine, bamboo, and plum are the three friends in winter; peach, plum, and apricot are a family in spring breeze", by using the images of these plants such as pine, bamboo, plum, peach, plum, and apricot, the noble qualities and beautiful implications admired by the Chinese people are integrated into it, enabling cultural information to be carried and spread vividly. In cross-cultural communication scenarios, it can arouse the interest and thinking of readers from different cultural backgrounds about the unique aesthetics and values of Chinese culture.

1.2 The Association between Language Structure and Cultural Thinking

The language structure of Chinese is closely connected with the thinking of Eastern culture (Ye, M. M., & Xu, M. J. 2024). For example, in Chinese sentences, there are often multiple verbs or verbal phrases used in succession to describe a complex action scene, which reflects the holistic thinking mode of Eastern culture. That is, it tends to grasp the whole picture and process of things as a whole rather than describe actions as isolated individuals. In some Chinese literary works describing the celebration activities of traditional festivals, there will be sentences like "Pasting Spring Festival couplets, hanging New Year pictures, making dumplings, setting off firecrackers, and the whole family sitting around to stay up on New Year's Eve". Through multiple consecutive verbs, the rich and interrelated activities during the Spring Festival are presented, showing a complete festival atmosphere and a cultural scene of family reunion, enabling readers to deeply feel the emphasis of Eastern culture on the integrity and relevance of things. This association between language structure and cultural thinking endows international Chinese literature works with a unique charm of Eastern culture and also provides an effective way for audiences from different cultural backgrounds such as Western readers to gain insights into the thinking mode of Eastern culture and helps them better understand the cultural logic behind the works.

2 Culture Influencing Language Expression

2.1 The Influence of Cultural Backgrounds on Language Selection

Different cultural backgrounds significantly influence the language selection of authors in the creation of international Chinese literature. When the works are targeted at Western readers, considering that Western culture emphasizes individuality, rationality, and clear logic, authors often adopt more straightforward and explicit vocabulary and sentence structures and avoid overly implicit and obscure expressions (Yu, M. 2024).

For example, when describing a character's emotions, they may use specific and vivid descriptions like "He was very happy, with a bright smile on his face and kept cheering and jumping for joy", rather than using traditional Chinese expressions with strong cultural metaphors like "He was beaming with joy and secretly delighted in his heart". In this way, Western readers can quickly and accurately capture the character's emotional state. Meanwhile, for concepts with Chinese cultural characteristics, authors may choose to add explanatory language. For example, when mentioning "Taijiquan", they will add an explanation like "This is a traditional martial art originating from ancient China. Its movements are slow and smooth, emphasizing the coordination and balance of the body and mind. It is deeply loved by the Chinese people and is often seen practiced by people in parks and other places". Through such explanations, it helps Western readers understand the meaning and value of this strange cultural element in the text, making the works easier to be accepted and understood, thus overcoming the barriers of cultural differences and achieving the effective transmission of cultural information.

2.2 The Influence of Cultural Values on Language Styles

Cultural values deeply shape the language styles of international Chinese literature works. In works that emphasize collectivist cultural values, language expressions tend to be implicit, euphemistic, and focus on maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships and the collective interests (Zhu, S. T. 2023). For example, when describing a team working together to complete a difficult task, it may be written like "Everyone worked with one heart and one mind, made silent contributions, and each took on their due responsibilities. Although they went through hardships, they finally achieved the goal together, and their tacit understanding and teamwork spirit became even deeper in this process". This kind of expression avoids overemphasizing individual achievements but emphasizes the collective efforts and team cohesion, and the language is relatively peaceful and restrained. On the contrary, in works influenced by individualist cultural values, the language style may be more direct and frank, focusing on the vivid expression of personal emotions and ideas. For example, when describing an individual's pursuit of a dream, there will be sentences like "I harbored a passionate dream, regardless of others' doubts and objections, and firmly moved forward towards the goal. I want to prove my value to the world and achieve my own glory". Such passionate and individualistic statements vividly reflect the guiding role of the differences in cultural values on language expression, enabling readers to feel the value orientations and spiritual outlooks of people under different cultural backgrounds from the language level.

3 The Interaction between Language and Culture in Cross-Cultural Communication

3.1 Cultural Interaction in Language Translation

In cross-cultural communication, language translation is an important means to achieve cultural interaction. In the process of translating international Chinese literature, translators need not only to accurately convey the linguistic information of the original text but also to handle the challenges brought about by cultural differences (Yang, Y. W. 2024). For example, when translating the classic of ancient Chinese literature "A Dream of Red Mansions", for cultural elements like the appellation "The Twelve Beauties of Jinling", translators cannot simply translate the literal meaning directly. They also need to add detailed explanations at the end of the text about the cultural meaning of Jinling, the symbolic significance of "chai" (hairpin) representing women in ancient Chinese culture, and the important positions of these twelve women in the novel, etc. Only in this way can Western readers better understand the rich cultural connotations behind this appellation. Another example is when translating the images in poetry. For instance, the image of "the bright moon" often embodies emotions such as homesickness and reunion in Chinese culture, but there may not be exactly the same cultural associations in Western culture. Translators can adopt the method of free translation plus annotation, translating "the bright moon" as "the bright moon that often evokes a sense of longing for home and reunion in Chinese culture", and further elaborating on its cultural implications in the annotations. In this way, while maintaining the cultural characteristics of the original text, it helps target readers overcome cultural barriers and realizes effective cultural interaction and exchange, enabling Chinese literary works to display their unique charm in the Western world.

3.2 Language Learning and Cultural Adaptation in Cross-Cultural Communication

Language learning and cultural adaptation in cross-cultural communication are the keys to achieving effective interaction. For learners of international Chinese literature, mastering Chinese language skills is just the first step. What's more important is to understand and adapt to Chinese

culture. Through the combination of language learning and cultural adaptation, learners can better understand and appreciate international Chinese literature works, thus achieving deeper cross-cultural communication. This combination not only helps learners improve their language abilities but also promotes their in-depth understanding of Chinese culture, laying a solid foundation for cross-cultural communication. Take European and American students learning Chinese as an example. In the process of learning Chinese vocabulary, it is crucial to understand the cultural connotations behind the vocabulary. For example, for the word "face" (face), if European and American students only understand it literally, they cannot truly grasp the complex meanings it represents in Chinese culture, including personal dignity, reputation, social status, and the emotional bond in interpersonal relationships. Only by deeply studying the concept of "mianzi" (face) in Chinese culture can they accurately understand the communication and interaction among characters and the cultural logic behind the plot development when reading Chinese literary works. Meanwhile, when coming into contact with international Chinese literature works, learners will gradually adapt to the ways of thinking and aesthetic concepts in Chinese culture.

For example, traditional Chinese literary works often use a large number of allusions and metaphors. At first, learners may find them obscure and difficult to understand. However, with a deeper understanding and adaptation to Chinese culture, they will gradually understand the profound implications and cultural values contained in these allusions and metaphors, thus improving their appreciation level of Chinese literary works, realizing the transformation from simple language learning to cultural adaptation, promoting cross-cultural communication to develop in deeper and broader fields, enhancing mutual understanding and tolerance among different cultures, and jointly building a rich, colorful, harmonious and symbiotic global cultural exchange pattern.

4 Conclusion

The research on the interaction between language and culture in international Chinese literature provides us with a new perspective for understanding cross-cultural communication. Language is not only the carrier of culture but also an important tool for cultural expression. By deeply exploring the interactive relationship between language and culture, we can better promote understanding and communication among different cultures and contribute to building a harmonious global cultural environment.

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