TRANSLATION TRANSFORMATIONS AS A MEANS OF OVERCOMING CULTURAL AND COGNITIVE DIFFERENCES.

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Abstract. *Translation is not merely a linguistic process but a transformative act that bridges cultural and cognitive gaps between societies. Different languages encode unique worldviews, values, and thought processes, making direct translation insufficient for effective communication. This paper explores how translation transformations—such as transcreation, localization, and semantic adaptation—help overcome cultural and cognitive differences. By examining examples from literature, diplomacy, and cognitive science, we highlight the challenges and strategies involved in ensuring cross-cultural communication. Additionally, we discuss ethical considerations in translation and the delicate balance between fidelity to the source text and necessary cultural adaptation.*

Key words: *translation transformations, transcreation, localization, semantic adaptation, cross-cultural communication.*

Introduction. Languages are more than tools of communication; they encapsulate the cultural and cognitive frameworks of the societies that use them. Translation, therefore, is not just about converting words from one language to another—it is a process of meaning negotiation and adaptation. The challenge lies in the fact that languages structure reality differently, which can lead to misinterpretations if translations are too literal.

For example, the German word *Schadenfreude* refers to the pleasure derived from someone else's misfortune. English lacks an exact equivalent, often requiring explanation or adaptation to convey the intended meaning. Similarly, the concept of *hygge* in Danish (a feeling of cozy contentment) cannot be fully captured in a single English word, demonstrating how linguistic structures reflect cultural values.

Given these challenges, translators must employ various strategies to ensure that meaning is conveyed effectively. Translation transformations, which include transcreation, localization, and semantic adaptation, serve as powerful tools in bridging cultural and cognitive divides.

Cultural and cognitive differences between languages create significant barriers in translation. These barriers stem from variations in conceptualization, idiomatic expressions, historical references, and linguistic structures. Understanding these differences is crucial for effective translation.

Each language carries unique cultural baggage, influencing the way speakers perceive the world. For instance:

Idiomatic Expressions: Phrases that make sense in one language may be nonsensical in another. The French phrase *avoir le cafard* (literally "to have the cockroach") means "to feel down" in English, but a direct translation would be confusing.

Humor and Satire: Jokes often rely on cultural knowledge. Political satire in English may not translate well into Mandarin due to differing cultural and political sensitivities.

Historical References: A phrase like "crossing the Rubicon" has a historical significance in Western culture but may be meaningless in languages where Roman history is not commonly taught.

Languages do not only differ culturally but also cognitively. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis suggests that language influences thought, meaning that speakers of different languages may perceive reality differently.

Color Perception: As mentioned earlier, Russian distinguishes between *goluboy* (light blue) and *siniy* (dark blue), whereas English simply uses "blue." This linguistic distinction affects how Russian speakers categorize colors.

Time Perception: Mandarin speakers often describe time in vertical terms (e.g., the future is "down"), whereas English speakers conceptualize time horizontally (e.g., the future is "ahead").

Numerical Cognition: Some indigenous languages, such as the Pirahã language in Brazil, lack specific number words beyond "one," "two," and "many," which influences how speakers perform mathematical tasks.

These cognitive differences pose challenges for translation, requiring careful adaptation of meaning rather than direct substitution of words.

To bridge cultural and cognitive gaps, translators use various transformation strategies that go beyond literal translation. The three most significant strategies are **transcreation, localization, and semantic adaptation**.

1. Transcreation

Transcreation involves recreating the original message in a way that maintains its intent, tone, and emotional impact in the target language. It is widely used in **advertising, literature, and entertainment**.

Example: In Coca-Cola's marketing campaign, the slogan **"Open Happiness"** was transcreated in China to **"开心每一刻"**, which means "Enjoy every moment happily." A direct translation would have sounded unnatural.

2. Localization

Localization adapts content to fit the cultural and linguistic norms of a target audience. This is particularly important in **software, gaming, and media** industries.

Example: The video game *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* changed certain religious symbols in its Arabic version to avoid offending local audiences.

- Hollywood movies often change character names or references to suit different audiences. In the *Harry Potter* series, "Philosopher's Stone" was changed to "Sorcerer's Stone" in the U.S. to appeal to American readers.

3. Semantic Adaptation

Some concepts do not exist in other languages, requiring **creative paraphrasing** or **analogous terms**.

Example: The Japanese word *wabi-sabi* (the beauty of imperfection) has no exact equivalent in English, so translators often explain it using phrases like "finding beauty in imperfection."

The Inuit people have multiple words for different types of snow, which must be adapted contextually in English.

Translation transformations come with ethical dilemmas: **Over-localization:** Excessive adaptation may distort the original meaning or erase cultural uniqueness.

Under-adaptation: Literal translations may result in misunderstanding or lack of engagement. **Censorship vs. Cultural Sensitivity:** Should offensive material be softened for certain audiences, or should it remain unchanged to preserve authenticity?

Balancing these factors requires skill, cultural awareness, and ethical judgment.

Conclusion. Translation is not simply about replacing words but about transforming meaning to fit cultural and cognitive contexts. Through transcreation, localization, and semantic adaptation, translators help bridge linguistic divides, fostering global communication and mutual understanding. As technology advances, the role of human translators in ensuring cultural sensitivity remains crucial.

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