

# Cultural Awareness and Translation Teaching at Higher Vocational College: Problems and Solutions

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**Abstract**—In this paper, an investigation has been done on culture knowledge acquisition and cultural awareness of English majors at Higher Vocational College by taking the students at Quzhou College of Technology as the subjects. The problem of lack of culture knowledge and cultural awareness has been shown through the analysis. The strategies and techniques on integrating culture into translation teaching at Higher Vocational Colleges are given for translation teaching by laying stress on imparting culture knowledge as well as translation skills so as to reduce students' translation errors.

**Index Terms**—cultural awareness, translation teaching, culture integration

## I. INTRODUCTION

Today, as the world evolves into the global world, various factors converge to drive people across national boundaries as never before, thus making intercultural contact a major concern and the importance of international communication takes on added urgency. However, distinct cultural perceptions and symbol systems have always stood in the way of intercultural communications. Translation always serves as an important means in cross-cultural communication in the history of human beings. Thus, translation involves two different languages, which are used to express what the two nations think, do, and say. Language is the carrier of culture. Culture influences language by way of symbols and rules as well as our perceptions of the universe. So, the process of translation, which is always regarded as bilingualism dealing, inevitably involves biculturalism. Since cultures are objectively different, translation is to deal with cultural differences, promoting cultural exchange. And the studies of translation are no longer limited to linguistic analysis and rigid comparison between the source text and the target text only, but in social and cultural contexts. To translate two languages involving two different cultures, the translators should cultivate the profound and comprehensive culture knowledge as well as the full familiarity with the language symbols so as to obtain the deep comprehension of the cultural differences. This brings great task to translation teaching, which has the responsibility of cultivating translators.

With the flourish of translation teaching, many studies have been made by scholars, translators or educators and teachers both in the west and in the east. Chinese scholars and translation teachers have also done a lot on translation teaching. For example, in the book "Translation Teaching: Theories and Practice", Liu Miqing (2003) advances three concrete guiding principles for translation teaching in China, discusses the aim and principles of translation teaching and gives some advice on both practical and theoretical teaching of translation; Mulei (1999) makes a research on "translation teaching in China", which focuses on the present situations of translation teaching in China from the aspects of subject construction, course establishment, teaching material compilation, teachers' training and teaching methods and gives some good advice on the reform of translation teaching. Besides, there are a lot of teachers who devote themselves to higher education, having done much on the study and research of translation teaching in universities.

On the basis of others' work, the author of this thesis wants to make a research on translation teaching at Higher Vocational College from cultural aspect for the purpose of finding some way out to improve translation teaching at Higher Vocational Colleges. In order to make it clear, the study is made on translation teaching at Quzhou College of Technology, which mainly concerns the influences of culture knowledge and cultural awareness on translation and translation teaching.

## II. CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND TRANSLATION

The English word "culture" comes from Latin word "cultura" whose primeval meaning is cultivation, crop and growth. The first definition reflects the Ancient Roman's understanding. And with the development of human civilization, the word "culture" has more extended meanings. According to the statistic of the Encyclopedia Britannica, there are more than 160 definitions of culture in all kinds of formal publications in the world (Bao Huinan, 2001). Culture is an ambiguous and intriguing concept. Probably the most classic definition of culture was provided by the 19th-century English anthropologist Edward Burnett Taylor, the founder of academic anthropology in the

English-speaking world and author of the first general anthropology textbook:

*Culture... taken in its wide ethnographic sense is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. The condition of culture among the various societies of mankind, in so far as it is capable of being investigated on general principles, is a subject apt for the study of laws of human thought and action. [1871:1]* (quoted in Harris, 1993, p.104)

According to Marvin Harris (1993), "...culture refers to the learned, socially acquired traditions that appear in rudimentary form among mammals, especially primates." (Harris, 1993, p.104)

Larry A. Samovar, Porter and Stefani (2000), in their works *Communication Between Cultures* (Third Edition), define culture as follows: "We define culture as the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, actions, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and artifacts acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving." (Samovar, Porter & Stefani, 2000, p. 36)

Actually one person can put up one definition and ten persons can put up ten definitions. But today more and more scholars believe that culture should cover all of aspects of human society. This is also the consideration of this thesis. Thus the author defines culture as follows:

Culture is a complex whole, which includes everything of the human society such as the traditions, customs, norms, beliefs, values, attitudes, thought-patterns, experience, religion, etc. and which can be learned and passed down from generation to generation.

Just as Larry A. Samovar (2000) puts it, "Culture can therefore include everything from rites of passage to concepts of the soul." (Samovar, Porter & Stefani, 2000, p.36) And the author of this dissertation also agrees on the three basic traits that are common to all: culture is shared; cultural components are interrelated and culture is learned.

#### A. *The Relationship between Culture and Language*

As a product of the development of society, language takes an important role in society and serves its purpose as it provides the means to express, to share and to transmit the ideas and experiences of the people who practice the corresponding cultures. Culture and language are inseparably intertwined, just as Rivers says, "Language cannot be separated from the culture in which it is deeply embedded" (quoted in Xu, 2002, p.5). Language is closely associated with the culture and culture influences language by way of symbols and rules as well as people's perceptions of the universe. "... it is impossible to separate our use of language from our culture. In its most basic sense, language is a set of symbols and the rules for combining those symbols that are used and understood by a large community of people. When we study another language, we soon discover that not only are the symbols (words) and sounds for those symbols different, but so are the rules (phonology, grammar, syntax, and intonation) for using those symbols and sounds." (Samovar, Porter & Stefani, 2000, p.122) Any language can be seen as a signal system representing a particular culture. As a result of this feature of language, culture and language are tightly linked and inseparable. "... And declared as firmly as Sapir or Whorf that 'No language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its center, the structure of the natural language.' Language, then, is the heart within the body of culture, and it is the interaction between the two that results in the continuation of life-energy." (Bassnett, 2004, p. 22)

On the one hand, language is a product, a part of culture. It is considered the keystone of culture. Without language, culture is impossible. Language comes into being during the process of the social practice of a certain group of people and develops in the social and historical settings. On the other hand, language is the carrier of culture and reflects culture. It records all the material and spiritual achievements of human beings in history. Shen Xiaolong puts forward the idea that "Language like a colorful mirror reflects the characteristics, of a nation's economy, politics, cultural psychology, etc., and is filtered with spirit of a nation's culture." (quoted in Peng, 2004) Language serves as a guide to understand the thoughts, ideas, and ways of life of the people who practice the corresponding culture. Through the acquisition of languages, people can learn culture left behind by their ancestors.

#### B. *The Relationship between Culture and Translation*

In human's history, translations have contributed greatly to the exchange of information across cultural boundaries. But what is translation? What is the link between translation and culture? Why does translation have a great deal to do with culture?

According to Jeremy Munday (2001), "The term translation itself has several meanings: it can refer to the general subject field, the product (the text has been translated) or the process (the act of producing the translation, otherwise known as translating). The process of translation between two different written languages involves the translator changing an original written text (the source text or ST) in the original verbal language (the source language or SL) into a written text (the target text or TT) in a different verbal language (the target language or TL)." (Munday, 2001, p.4-5) This type of translation corresponds to "interlingual translation", one of the three categories of translation described by Roman Jakobson, the Czech structuralist. Jakobson's categories are as follows:

1. intralingual translation, or 'rewording': 'an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language';
2. interlingual translation, or 'translation proper': 'an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other

language’;

3. intersemiotic translation, or ‘transmutation’: ‘an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign systems’. (quoted in Munday, 2001, p.5)

So far as this thesis is concerned, the second one, that is, interlingual translation, will be taken into consideration. Thus translation process has to do with two different languages, i.e. Chinese and English. In this aspect, translation is a process of exchanging information from one language to another. Therefore, it is not strange that, nowadays, most people regard translation as a bilingual art of cross-cultural communication, for as we talked in 2.2 that language and culture are intimately bounded and depend on each other. And one of the most striking features in contemporary translation theory and practice is the orientation towards culture transfer. “Snell-Hornby (1998) claims that translation process can no longer be envisaged as being between two languages but between two cultures involving ‘cross-culture transfer’. Eugene Nida (1993) holds that translation is a reproduction of the message of the original work by means of the transformation of the closest natural equivalent.” (Fu, 2004) Liao Qiye (2000) also says, “cultural concepts, which underlines the variety of language usage and language habits, come to be the key area of translation studies.” (Liao Qiye, 2000, p.172)

As we can see in the above discussion, culture is an extremely complex concept and an enormous subject. It almost includes everything in the development process of human society and almost embraces everything in the world, no matter material or spiritual. Language, as the most important symbolic system in culture, contains all kinds of cultural deposits in the grammar, forms of address as well as texts. In this reason, “translation is associated with two cultural contexts in which their cultural content is conveyed in two different languages, and it lays emphasis on how to convey in a precise way the original cultural connotation and how to interpret it on the basis of the native cultural perspective so as to achieve communication.” (Fu, 2004)

Nida holds the view that “translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style” (quoted in Peng, 2004).

From the statements about translation given above, we can get the idea that translation takes place between two languages, which are separately intrinsic parts of a culture, and which are both culturally-bound. Susan Bassnett even uses the relationship between surgeon, heart, and body to vividly explain the relationship between translator, language and culture. She says, “Language, then, is the heart within the body of culture, and it is the interaction between the two that results in the continuation of life-energy. In the same way that the surgeon, operating on the heart, cannot neglect the body that surrounds it, so the translator treats the text in isolation from the culture at his peril.” (Bassnett, 2004, p. 22) This metaphor also tells us how important the role is, which the culture specifics play in the process of translation.

### C. Cultural Awareness

Awareness, according to WTNID (Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, 1961), means “the quality or state of being aware”. Cultural awareness, is, according to Tomalin and Stempleski, “the term we have used to describe sensitivity to the impact of culturally-induced behavior on language use and communication” (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993, p.10). They think cultural awareness encompasses three qualities:

- awareness of one’s own culturally-induced behavior;
- awareness of the culturally-induced behavior of others;
- ability to explain one’s own cultural standpoint. (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993, p.10)

“Since translation is a peculiar type of intercultural communication, involving two linguistically different cultures, what should be concerned here is cross-cultural awareness, which refers to the translator’s perception of the cultural elements of the languages involved in the process of translation.” (Liao & Tu, 2004) Robert G. Hanvey classifies the cross-cultural awareness into four levels:

Level	Information	Mode	Interpretation
I	awareness of superficial or very visible cultural traits: stereotypes	tourism, textbooks, National Geographic	unbelievable, i.e., exotic, bizarre
II	awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrast markedly with one’s own	culture conflict situations	unbelievable, i.e., frustrating, irrational
III	awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrast markedly with one’s own	intellectual analysis	believable, cognitively
IV	awareness of how another culture feels from the stand-point of the insider	cultural immersion; living the culture	believable because of subjective familiarity

(quoted in Liao & Tu, 2004)

Translator, as a cultural mediator, is destined to be equipped with cultural awareness. So, in order to attain intercultural awareness, foreign language teachers, especially, those who teach translation, have to make the students know Hanvey’s statement of four levels of intercultural awareness and should provide learners with maximum

experience to reach the higher level of intercultural awareness.

### III. CULTURAL AWARENESS OF THE STUDENTS AT HIGHER VOCATIONAL COLLEGE

In order to have a clearer picture of the students' cultural awareness, the author made a survey among the students at Quzhou College of Technology. The subjects of this study are 35 sophomores in Class 3033, among whom 17 graduated from ordinary rural middle schools, 14 from ordinary city middle schools and 4 came from key city middle schools. The questionnaire was designed to investigate the students to get some general ideas of their cultural awareness, culture knowledge study and their opinions on the current translation teaching materials.

Totally there were 12 questions in the questionnaire. Of the twelve questions, three categories can be divided into. Questions 1, 2, 8 can be classified into the first category that is to find out whether the students have cultural awareness in learning foreign language. The second category includes questions 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 4, 5 and 12, which are about their culture learning and translation. Question 6 is grouped into the third category, which focuses on translation teaching materials and this category will not be discussed here in this thesis. The results of the investigation of the first and second categories will be illustrated in the following with the help of tables.

#### A. Cultural Awareness in English Learning --the First Category

The first category includes questions 1, 2 and 8, the purpose of which is to find out students' cultural awareness in English learning. The result that the students are lack of cultural knowledge and cultural awareness is found.

1. Question 1: How much concern do you show for culture knowledge during your English learning?

TABLE 2  
CONCERN FOR CULTURE KNOWLEDGE

Don't Care	A Little	Some	Quite	Very Much
2.86% (1)	34.29% (12)	25.71% (9)	28.57% (10)	8.57% (3)

2. Question 2: When English teachers introduce cultural knowledge, how clearly can you realize it?

TABLE 3  
RECOGNITION OF TEACHERS' CULTURE INSTRUCTION

Always Can't	Can't Unless the Teacher Reminds	Sometimes Can	Always Can	Very Clearly
0	25.71% (9)	45.71% (16)	22.86% (8)	5.71% (2)

3. Question 8: How much do you know about the values in the western countries?

TABLE 4  
AWARENESS OF WESTERN VALUES

Nothing	A Little	Some	Much	Very Much
5.71% (2)	80% (28)	14.29% (5)	0	0

The above three questions are used to investigate students' cultural awareness. Q1 shows us that only 13 students were quite or very concerned about cultures in their English study, which only takes 37.14% of the whole class. One person (2.86%) said he concerned nothing about culture. 34.29% of the whole, that is, 12 students, showed a little concern for the culture. Another 9 persons, 25.71% of the total, voiced that they had some concern for cultures. So, we can get the conclusion that in Class 3033 most students didn't pay much attention to culture knowledge during their English learning, for 22 students, 62.86% of the whole class, which constitutes a large portion of the whole, showed some or a little or even no concern for cultures during their study.

In response to Q2, among the total of 35 students, 9 (25.71%) said that if the teacher didn't remind them, they couldn't realize that the teacher was introducing culture knowledge, while only 2 (5.71%) students thought they could clearly know that the teacher was talking about culture. And 16 students, which take up 45.71% of the whole, declared that sometimes they could get the idea that the teacher was introducing them some knowledge about culture. Another 8 persons, accounting for 22.86%, could always realize that the teacher was giving some culture knowledge.

For Q8, 30 students, 85.71% of the total, said that they knew nothing or only a little about the values in the western countries. The other 5 persons, that is, 14.29%, knew some. From the figures we can get some ideas that all the students were lack of the knowledge on Western values, which plays a very important role in the culture.

The data in Tables 2, 3, 4 indicate that most students in Class 3033 have weak cultural awareness and don't have some basic culture-bound knowledge about English-speaking countries. The above discussion gives a clear picture of the present condition of the students about their cultural awareness, too.

To some extent, this finding shows obviously the reason why the students can't do a good job in their translation exercises. It is the lack of culture knowledge and cultural awareness that directly causes some mistranslation or wrong translation. As we have discussed, translator, as a cultural mediator, is destined to be equipped with cultural awareness, for "translation is a peculiar type of intercultural communication, involving two linguistically different cultures" (Liao & Tu, 2004). This finding again tells us that it is emergency for the students to learn more about the western cultures and to strengthen their cultural awareness. As for the teacher, it is a crying need to give more stress on culture teaching

and introduce more about the western cultures in every aspect.

#### B. Culture Acquisition and Its Application in Translation-- the Second Category

This category involves questions 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 4, 5 and 12, which focus on students' culture acquisition and its application in translation. The data in this part will tell us something about students' culture learning and their opinions on culture learning and translation. The findings show that the students in Class 3033 regard culture knowledge helpful in translation, the lack of which may cause their translation errors, but they spent little time on culture learning and seldom carried out self-study in learning cultural knowledge.

##### 1. Question 3: Have you read any books or other materials on cultures in the western countries?

TABLE 5  
BOOKS READ ON WESTERN CULTURES

No	Few	A Few	Some	Many
8.57% (3)	40% (14)	42.86% (15)	8.57% (3)	0

##### Question 7: How do you learn culture?

TABLE 6  
CULTURE LEARNING

Have No Idea	Only Depend on Teacher's Introduction, Without out-class learning	Mainly Depend on Teacher's Introduction, Also Learn It Out Class, But Not Often	Learn It Only Under Teacher's Requirement	Learn It Autonomously
2.86% (1)	20% (7)	45.71% (16)	20% (7)	11.42% (4)

When answering Q3, 3/8.57% said they had never read any books on western cultures, while 14/40% saying they had read few books in this field, 15/42.86% saying a few, and only 3/8.57% saying some, but no one said he had read many books about cultures in English-speaking countries by the time they did this investigation paper. In the investigation, the students were asked to mark whether the books they had read were in English or in Chinese. About one-third of all the respondents marked them, from which the author saw that only a few were in English and most of these English books were their textbooks. This also shows that the students in Class 3033 seldom get books on western cultures to read autonomously.

As for Q7, 4/11.42% indicated that usually they learned culture autonomously, while 1/2.86% said that he had no idea about it, that is, in his own words, he didn't know what should be done in learning culture. 7/20% among 35 students stated that they would not learn the knowledge about culture but only depended on teacher's instruction in the class. 23 of them, approximate for 65.71%, claimed that besides teacher's introduction in the class, they also learned culture knowledge outside class, among which 7/20% said they learned only when the teacher required them to.

From the findings in these two questions, we can get a clear fact that only a very small part in Class 3033 carried out autonomous study, while most students depended on their teachers. This result corresponds to the evaluation most of their teachers gave about them: most of them were too lazy, just waiting the teachers to tell them everything and they didn't do self-study. This again shows that some students in this class don't have a strong self-study motivation in learning. That is actually one of the reasons why they made some simple mistakes in translation, for they have a poor command of English and don't have some very visible, general culture knowledge. Some made mistakes in present tense, and some even didn't know the past participle of the word "teach", which they spelled as "tached" instead of the correct form "taught".

##### 2. Question 9: At present, how many hours do you spend on culture learning in your English study outside class each week?

TABLE 7  
TIME SPENT ON CULTURE LEARNING

No	One Hour	Two Hours	Three Hours	Other Answers
22.86% (8)	28.57% (10)	25.71% (9)	14.29% (5)	8.57% (3)

##### Question 10: How many hours do you think should be spent on culture learning in your English study outside class each week?

TABLE 8  
TIME TO BE SPENT ON CULTURE LEARNING

One Hour	Two Hours	Three Hours	Four Hours	Other Answers
2.86% (1)	22.86% (8)	22.86% (8)	40% (14)	11.42% (4)

##### Question 11: How many hours do you think should be spent in introducing culture knowledge in translation classes?

TABLE 9  
TIME TO BE SPENT INTRODUCING CULTURE IN TRANSLATION CLASSES

5% of the total	10% of the total	15% of the total	20% of the total	Other Answers
2.86% (1)	14.29% (5)	28.57% (10)	42.86% (15)	11.42% (4)

In Questions 9, 10, 11, the respondents told us how many hours they spent on and how many hours they thought should be spent on culture learning per week. The result of Q9 shows that 8/22.86% of all had not spent any time on culture learning by the time of the investigation, while 10/ 22.57% saying one hour per week, 9 /25.71% saying two hours per week, 5/14.29% stating three hours per week, and 3/8.57% others answering the question with the answers given by themselves. Among these three self-given answers, one was “learning it whenever I was free” and another two were: “every two days” and “didn’t have fixed time, but read some magazines or newspapers as possible as I could when I was free.” In other words, only 8 students, less than one-fourth of the whole class, spent three or more than three hours per week in learning culture knowledge, and the other 27 admitted that they only spent one or two hours or even no hour on culture knowledge that they all think is helpful or greatly helpful to translation, which can be shown in the result of Q4.

Answers to Q10 are about students’ opinions on how many hours should be spent on culture learning every week. Most of them aired their opinions that culture learning should take at least three or more hours each week, since 8/22.86% thought three hours should be spent every week, 14/40% declared four hours and another 4/11.42% gave other answers, among which one said “one hour per day”, one stated “three to four hours”, one thought “five hours should be needed”, and the last held the opinion that “the more, the better”. The rest 9/25.72% chose the first or the second choice. Of the nine students, 1/2.86%, who said he spent no hour in learning culture in Q9, chose the first choice, one hour and 8/ 22.86% chose the second, two hours.

Q11 is about their thoughts on the time spent in introducing culture knowledge in the classes of translation. 1/2.86% proposed 5% of the whole teaching hours should be spent; 5/14.29% said 10%; 10/18.57% suggested 15% be necessary; 15/42.86% thought 20% of the whole was needed; and 4/11.42% gave other answers, which were all above 20%: one was 25%, one 40%, one more than 40%, another was the more, the better.

The findings in Q10 and Q11 sharply contradict with that of Q9 in which a large portion spent less than three hours each week on culture learning. This contradiction, on the other hand, reveals a fact that although most students think culture should be emphasized in English language learning, they don’t spend much time on it in daily study. This can also reach the findings we have got in the above that the students in Class 3033 at Quzhou College of Technology are lack of learning autonomy and lack of culture knowledge, for they spent little time on culture knowledge study, which may directly result in their lack of cultural awareness.

3. Question 4: Do you think culture learning has some help to correct and accurate translation?

TABLE 10  
CULTURE LEARNING AND CORRECT TRANSLATION

No	Little	Some	Much	Very Much
0	0	17.14% (6)	45.71% (16)	37.14% (13)

Question 5: How do you handle the relation between training your translation skills and leaning culture when you study translation course?

TABLE 11  
TRANSLATION SKILL TRAINING AND CULTURE LEARNING

Only Concern Skill Training	Only Concern Culture Learning	Lay Equal Stress on the Two	Skill Training First, Culture Learning Second	Culture Learning First, Skill Training Second
5.71% (2)	2.86% (1)	45.71% (16)	31.43% (16)	14.29% (5)

Question 12: What is the main cause, do you think, of your mistranslation or wrong translation?

TABLE 12  
CAUSES OF WRONG TRANSLATION

Don’t Know Some Words	Can’t Analyze Sentence Structure	Don’t Understand the Context	Don’t Know Some Culture Specifics	Others
40% (14)	17.14% (6)	11.42% (4)	22.86% (8)	8.57% (3)

Questions 4,5,12 have something to do with respondents’ culture learning and translation. Q4 deals with whether culture learning is helpful to accurate and correct translation. To this question, it was unanimously agreed that culture learning did function in translation, with 6/17.14% considering some help, 16 /45.71% stating much help and 13 /37.14% saying great help.

While in answering Q5, 2 students (5.71%) said that they only cared about the training of translation skills when studying the course of translation; 1/2.86% stated that culture learning was his only concern; 16/ 45.71% of the whole chose the third answer, i.e. laying equal stress on the two; 11/31.43% claimed that skills came the first and culture learning the second, while 5/14.29% just took the opposite answer, which was culture learning the first and skills the second.

When asked about the main reason of their present mistranslation or wrong translation, 14/40% questionees thought it was because they didn't understand some words. For this, the author made an oral investigation when giving class in Class 3033. Mainly there were two aspects. One was that they didn't know the literal meanings of some words, because these were new words for them. The other was that they didn't understand the intensive meanings of some words, that is, they knew the words but couldn't understand them, especially those culture-specified. 6/17.14% said the reason was that they couldn't analyze sentence structures; 4/11.42% regarded it as their failure in understanding the context; 8/22.86% took the consideration of their lack of culture knowledge; and the rest 3/8.57% gave other reasons. One of them said it was because he didn't study heartedly and hard enough; one supported all the given answers in choices 1,2,3 and 4, in the other words, he thought it was a complex reason of the four that caused his failure in translation; another one said that when the sentence structure was too complicated, he didn't know how to translate it.

So, from the results and the discussion of these three questions, we can find that the respondents regard culture learning helpful to translation and it is the culture knowledge that influences their translating correctness. But in the process of learning and practice, some students did not pay much attention to culture learning, which can be shown by the result of Q5 in Table11 that 5.71% of them only concerned translation skill training and 31.43% thought translation skills should come first before culture learning.

By now we have discussed the present situation of the respondents' cultural awareness, culture acquisition in English learning and its application in translation. The findings of all these questions show us some common problems of the students in Class 3033 at Quzhou College of Technology:

- a.) Most of them show little concern for culture learning during their study and have weak culture awareness.
- b.) They all agree that culture leaning needs more time. But in actual practice, most of them don't spend much time in learning culture and only a very small part of the students in this class learn culture knowledge autonomously.
- c.) All of them subscribe to the opinion that culture knowledge is of great help to translation and the same attention should be paid to both translation skills and learning of culture in the process of translation study, the later of which is the main reason of some mistranslation or wrong translation in their translation exercises. But in the process of learning and practice, some students did not pay attention to culture learning and some even don't know what to learn and how to learn.

#### IV. STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES ON CULTURE INTEGRATION IN TRANSLATION TEACHING

The analysis on the investigation shows that the students are lack of cultural awareness and cultural knowledge, but they think culture knowledge is very important in avoiding translation errors in translation practice. In order to improve students' cultural awareness and cultural knowledge, the following methods can be used in teaching translation.

##### A. *Integrating Culture into Classroom Teaching*

According to Kenneth D. Moore (1998), teaching can be defined as "the action of a person imparting skill or knowledge or giving instruction; the job of a person who teaches" (Moore, 1998, p.6). Clark and Starr (1986) suggested, "teaching is an attempt to assist students in acquiring or changing some skill, knowledge, ideal, attitude, or appreciation." (quoted in Moore, 1998, p.6) Classroom is an important place for the teacher to give instruction and to impart skill or knowledge. So, effective teaching is central to the process of learning and teaching. And effective teachers are, first, those who are effective decision makers. When culture teaching is concerned, the teacher must first consider what culture knowledge to teach and how to integrate it into classroom teaching.

##### 1. Suggestions Regarding Teaching Program

Higher Vocational Education is to cultivate the talents in the front position in the fields of production, management, and service. For English majors, there is an inevitable need to communicate with foreigners either facially or through some media. As for English teaching, this requires that we should pursue cultural education to increase students' culture knowledge. Gao Yihong (1998), in the study for her doctoral dissertation, proves that learning culture plays a very important role in the expansion of the mode of thinking, the reconstruction of values and the remolding of personality structure. In her opinion, the learner's personality becomes more open and integrated at the same time he learns a language and the related culture (quoted in Lu, 2002, p.8-10). That is, language learning and culture learning are of great help in elevating students' personality as well as enlarging their knowledge scope. But the English Teaching Syllabus for Higher Vocational Colleges doesn't mention culture or development of cultural awareness. So, the revision of the Syllabus and the establishment of curriculum are in great emergency, though they will consume a lot of time and manpower. The following are some suggestions that may be practical under present circumstances.

- a. Cultural awareness and cultural ability must be made goals in the English Teaching Syllabus and Translation Teaching Syllabus at Higher Vocational Colleges; the syllabuses should include some cultural items that the students need to learn and grasp.
- b. Curriculum designers should keep in mind the cultural content courses. Optional courses such as "Communication Across Culture", "Language and Culture", "An Introduction of Western Society and Culture", "Foreign Film Appreciation", etc. should be provided for the students to increase their cultural awareness. And these will help a lot to improve their translation ability.
- c. Vocational practice should be a part of talent cultivation plan and be put more emphasis on, for culture acquisition

can not be achieved only through classroom teaching. Vocational practice does a good deed for English majors, and “it should be the gist of the construction of curriculum and the content of teaching system” (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2000).

## 2. Suggestions Regarding Teaching Facilities for the Conditions

The teaching facilities mentioned here mainly refer to teaching materials and teaching staff. Zhang Meifang (2001) made a research on translation teaching materials in China. In the research, she made a survey on the use of translation textbooks and required the responders to give the reasons why he or she liked or disliked the textbooks. The findings showed that most respondents regarded the present translation textbooks old and out of date, disorderly and unsystematic, lack of translation theories and out of contact with the practical need, and the suggestions that a series of authoritative textbooks should be designed by some academic authorities and that textbooks should be practical and suit the needs of the society were given (Zhang Meifang, 2001, p.133-135). Mu Lei (1999) in her research on Translation Teaching in China also raises the same questions about the textbooks used in translation course in China (see “*Translation Teaching in China*”, Mu Lei, 1999, p. 38-52). According to Mu’s research, another big problem translation teaching faces in China is the shortage of teaching staff. Her research shows that the translation teachers are mainly above 40 years old, young teachers under 35 years are only a small part in the whole staff, and that there are not enough translation teachers who have master or doctor degrees (Mu Lei, 1999, p.52). Their researches show us two big problems that do exist now in our translation teaching: lack of good textbooks and shortage of teachers. The whole higher education is facing the two big problems, let alone Higher Vocational Colleges, which are commonly inferior to other colleges or universities in every aspect. So, good translation teaching materials under the educational aims for Higher Vocational Colleges should be compiled and the teachers should be trained accordingly.

## 3. Infiltrating Culture Specifics through Teaching Process

When we do translation, we have to come across a lot of materials with different contents and styles in different literary forms. So, before asking students to translate a particular sentence or article, the teacher needs to introduce the relative cultural background knowledge if there is any. Besides, there are many culture-loaded words or expressions both in English and Chinese, the former of which some students may not have a clear picture of. Also, we will meet some socio-culture related expressions, especially in greetings. All of this calls our attention while teaching and learning. Teachers can use the following methods in teaching translation.

a. The Digging Method: This refers to digging out those culture-loaded words or expressions. These words usually have their denotations and their connotations or associations, closely related to their culture. Thus they always block students in their translation and also trap them in inter-culture communication. In English, the culture-loaded words or expressions can be largely founded in some single words, phrases, proverbs, allusions, idioms, etc. For example, in Chinese, “眼红(yanhong)” refers “jealous”, but in English, the color “red” doesn’t have this meaning. Instead, they use the color “green”. So, when we translate the sentence “当我给她看我的新车时，她很眼红”，we should translate it as “She was green-eyed when I showed her my new car.” In this sentence, we can find some equivalent words like “green-eyed”, “jealous” and “envious” for “yan hong”. But for some, we can’t find direct equivalents in English such as “阴(yin)”, “阳(yang)”, “三伏(sanfu)”, “臭老九(choulaojiu)”, etc. In turn, the English words such as, cowboy, individualism, hippie, gold rush, etc fail to find equivalents in Chinese.

From these examples, we can see that there are so many culture-loaded words in both languages that are really obstacles to learner’s understanding and translation. So it is necessary for the teachers to introduce cultures so as to help students release these traps and do well in translation.

b. Grammar Noted Method: In Chinese-English or English-Chinese translation, we have to deal with the two different languages with different sentence structures. Language itself is a part of culture which Nida calls lingual culture and language, as the most important symbolic system in culture, contains all kinds of cultural deposits in grammar, forms of address as well as texts. Therefore, translation teachers need to remind students of grammatical differences in the two languages as well as to impart translation skills and instruct knowledge with culture specifics, for those grammatical phenomena also have target cultural characteristics.

c. Example Comparison Method: In instruction, teachers can choose some examples of translations both in English and in Chinese with distinct cultural background or characteristics and ask the students to compare those translation versions to find out the best translated ones. During this process, the students can directly acquire some culture knowledge, and at the same time, it is a good way for teachers to show translation skills. Also it is an easy way for the students to understand the features between the two languages and avoid Chinglish in Chinese-English translation.

d. Culture Aside: Culture aside is often used in culture teaching in FLT. It refers to direct introduction or explanation of cultural background information in teaching materials. For translation teaching, in order to lower the mistakes in translating some culture-bound passages or materials, teachers can take some time aside to introduce related cultural information before students do the translation. Surely, teachers can leave this task for the students. That is to say, before the class, the teacher requires the students to find out some specific culture background knowledge that will be used in the translation task, and in the class the teacher asks the students to give presentations and analyze the translation material before actual translation task begins. Thus it not only can stimulate students’ learning autonomy, but puts students in the center of learning and teaching. Students, in this process, take the main part and the teacher is the guide who plans, guides and evaluates learning. Besides, multi-media or videos can be used to vividly show students some



cultural information.

e. Situation Simulation: Here the situation simulation refers to the simulation of real situation, which means that the teacher can create some real situations of interpretation in class. For example, the teacher can create a situation of package tour, in which the tourists speak English and they don't understand Chinese and a guide who can speak both Chinese and English. The tourists are visiting a local Chinese culture museum. But the interpreter in the museum can't speak English. So the guide has to translate what the interpreter has said into English for the tourists. In this situation, the class can first be divided into three groups, which take the roles of the three respectively. For the group of the tourists, they have to express what they want to ask in English; for the group who takes the role of the interpreter, they have to know a lot about the local culture; and for the group of the guide, they have to know both the English and Chinese languages well so that they can translate what the interpreter has said. And the situation can also be in some English-speaking countries where the tourists speak Chinese and the interpreter speaks English and they don't understand each other. Of course, this may be a difficult task for the students at Higher Vocational Colleges. But it will be a great help to both culture learning and translating training. At the same time, this kind of activity puts the students in a simulated situation, which they can take as a vocational practice.

#### B. *Laying Stress on Different Ways of Thinking between East and West*

Different ways of thinking between the east and the west cause the different ideas, values and even different language expressions. J. Needham (1956) suggests that the way of thinking of the Chinese is a global precedence. And the Chinese pay more attention to the whole picture than its details in their observation of the Chinese characters. Larry A. Samovar (2004) claims, "Because Chinese culture is distinctively collective, Chinese education emphasizes the goals of the group of society, fosters in-group belonging, demands cooperation and interdependence, and pursues harmony. The Chinese always stress moral education over intellectual and physical education." (Samovar & Porter, 2004, p. 236) Jia Yuxin (1997) maintains that logic, analysis, and linearity are the peculiarities pertaining to the thinking model of western nations. Conversely, the thinking model of eastern nations is famous for its intuitive holistic nature and harmonious dialectical nature (Jia Yuxin, 1997, p.98-100). Chunfen Feng, in her "*Contrasts between Western and Chinese Cultures*", says that "each culture is distinct in its patterning of values" and points out six contrasts "summarizing the distinct qualitative differences between western culture and Chinese culture" (Chunfen Feng, 2004). They are as follows:

1. Western culture emphasizes "active mastery" in the person-nature relationship, whereas traditional Chinese culture emphasized "passive acceptance" of fate by seeking harmony with nature.
2. Western culture tends to be connected with external experiences and the world of things, whereas traditional Chinese culture emphasized inner experiences of meaning and feeling.
3. Western culture is characterized by an open view of the world, emphasizing change and movement, whereas traditional Chinese culture was typified by a closed world view, prized stability and harmony.
4. Western culture places primary faith in rationalism and is oriented toward the future, whereas traditional Chinese culture rested upon kinship ties and tradition with a past orientation.
5. Western culture emphasizes horizontal dimensions of interpersonal relationships, whereas traditional Chinese culture placed more weight on vertical interpersonal relationships.
6. Western culture values the individual personality, whereas traditional Chinese culture weighted heavily a person's duties to family, clan, and state. (Feng, 2004)

So, the teacher should inform the students of these differences in teaching, and remind them of keeping in mind the different ways of thinking, which influence their language structures, when doing translation.

#### C. *Introducing Culture through Extracurricular Activities*

For college students, autonomous learning plays an important role in acquiring a language and its culture. They have a lot of spare time to spend either on study or on out-class activities that have nothing to do with their foreign language study. If they can combine the two together, isn't it a good way for both learning and enjoyment? And how can they acquire western cultures through extracurricular activities? The best way may be via intercultural activities, which refer to the activities of such kind as seeing foreign films, watching TV, intercultural communication, campus English festival, etc., in which students can have the opportunities for direct contact with the host culture.

Besides, lectures can be organized to introduce some particular western cultures. Experts or foreigners can be invited to give lectures on different cultures in English-speaking countries.

In addition, vocational practice is, for English majors, a good chance to gain comprehensive English competence, their translation ability and intercultural communicative ability. Of course, the main purpose here we have, is for the students to learn more about the western cultures during their vocational practice in which they can have more chances to meet and communicate with foreigners. And in their vocational practice, some students may have to do some written or oral translation work for the company. This is also a good chance for them to put what they have learned in the classroom into the real practice.

## V. CONCLUSION

To avoid failures in both culture-bound translation and intercultural communication, culture teaching is in vital need to develop students' cultural awareness and cultural competence in foreign language teaching (FLT). It is also the task of translation teaching. However, how to teach culture knowledge and how to improve students' cultural competence remains a question. Translation teaching is a complicated problem, for culture itself is a complicated phenomenon and translation itself is, too, a complicated problem. The exploration in this thesis of how to introduce culture specifics in translation teaching at Higher Vocational Colleges only touches a very limited number of the issues. Rather than having discovered a comprehensive solution, this study only attempts to arouse attention to translation teaching at Higher Vocational Colleges in the hope of improving translation teaching at Higher Vocational Colleges so as to reach the goal of Higher Vocational Education.

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