

A Study of Idiom Translation Strategies between English and Chinese

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Abstract—This paper, focusing on idiom translation methods and principles between English and Chinese, with the statement of different idiom definitions and the analysis of idiom characteristics and culture differences, studies the strategies on idiom translation, what kind of method should be used and what kind of principle should be followed as to get better idiom translations.

Index Terms— idiom, translation, strategy, principle

I. DEFINITIONS OF IDIOMS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

Idiom is a language in the formation of the unique and fixed expressions in the using process. As a language form, idioms has its own characteristic and patterns and used in high frequency whether in written language or oral language because idioms can convey a host of language and cultural information when people chat to each other. In some senses, idioms are the reflection of the environment, life, historical culture of the native speakers and are closely associated with their inner most spirit and feelings. They are commonly used in all types of languages, informal and formal. That is why the extent to which a person familiarizes himself with idioms is a mark of his or her command of language. Both English and Chinese are abundant in idioms. Idioms are considered as quintessence and treasury of a language.

These statements above in certain degree reflect the idioms' characteristics, but cannot be regarded as idioms' definition. It is difficult to give a clear-cut definition to the word idiom. Firstly, idioms range very widely, which includes slang, proverbs, figurative phrases, motto, sayings, quotation, jargon, colloquial, two-part allegorical sayings, and so on. One idiom may possess several meanings, which might get readers completely at sea. Secondly, People of different nations have different geographical environment, historical allusion, historical backgrounds, religions, so they are sure to have deeply connected to traditional culture and customs. All of these causes bring difficulty to define an idiom, and different experts have different opinions and definitions about idioms. However, some English Dictionaries give "idiom" a variety of definitions as follows.

Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary defines an idiom as "phrase or sentence whose meaning is not clear from the meaning of its individual words and which must be learnt as a whole unit". (1997, p.734) *Collins Co-build Learner's Dictionary* defines an idiom as "an idiom is a group of words which have a different meaning when used together from the one they would have if you took the meaning of each word individually". (1996, p. 547) *New Simplified English Dictionary* gives an idiom such a definition as "a group of words which have a special meaning when used together". (1966, p.524) *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines an idiom as "a phrase which means something different from their meanings of the separate words from which it is formed". (1988, p.711) *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American language (2nd college edition, 1972)* gives this definition "an accepted phrase, construction, or expression contrary to the patterns of the language's having a meaning different from the language or having different from the literal". According to all those descriptions, "idiom" is a phrase or a group of words approved by people and has unique form. Its meaning is different from the literal. People use idioms to make their language richer and more colorful and to convey subtle shades of meaning or intention. Idioms are often used to replace a literal word or expression, and many times the idiom better describes the full nuance of meaning. Idioms and idiomatic expressions can be more precise than the literal words, often using fewer words but saying more. For example, the expression "it runs in the family" is shorter and more succinct than saying that a physical or personality trait is fairly common throughout one's extended family and over a number of generations. (Zeng Xin, 2004, p.129)

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF IDIOMS

Language is the carrier of human culture. Idioms are an extremely important language phenomenon and the essence of language. Idioms play an important role in the communication of human beings and they are a significant part of the general vocabulary of languages. It is known to all that idioms are mainly formed or created by people during their daily life, and they are the natural outcome of the working people's life practice and experience. Lots of cultural information is embedded in idioms. A variety of idioms could be found in languages, which are vivid and expressive.

People of all ages tend to make full use of idioms in different ways. They are regarded as not only the gems of languages, but also the crystallization of human wit and wisdom. They best mirror the national characteristic embodied in a language and they are thus always rich in culture connotation and national flavor. It is the colorful and meaningful idioms that make languages in the world so beautiful. For instance, such idioms on animals as “as timid as a hare”, “it rains dogs and cats”, and so on. Without idioms, our language would become dull and boring.

With the evolution of history and culture, quite a lot of idioms are not only closely associated with human being's daily life, but also have a great influence on our survival and development. Some of them can be applied to broader situations and some of them often contain enough philosophical and incisive theories for people to study and they have become an important part of modern English. Such idioms as “to make a clean sweep of something”, “to hit the nail on the head”, and so forth. According to *Webster's New World American Idioms Handbook* (2003), idioms are the result of long-term use of language, and gradually form their own characteristics including the region, nationality, figurativeness, religion, integrity and concordance and so on.

Firstly, take the characteristic of region for example. China is an agricultural country and its economy is dominated by farming, so cattle, mountains, hills, soil and plants are often used for metaphor. Such idioms as “be as steady as Mount Tai”, “spend money like soil” and so on. While, Britain is an island country and sea girt, whose fisheries are developed, therefore, fish and water is often used for metaphor, such idioms as “the best fish swim near the bottom”, “spend money like water” and so on. People of different regions express their ideas in different ways, but both “spend money like soil” and “spend money like water” express the same meaning.

Secondly, take the characteristic of integrity for example. Idioms are not only set phrases where the words together have a meaning that is different from the individual words, which can make idioms hard for foreigners to understand; but also short sentences made up of two or more words, and it functions as a unit of meaning which cannot be predicted from its literal meaning of its component words, as in “*He's pushing up daisies*” for “*He's Dead and Buried*”. (Heinemann, 2004, p. 344) That is to say, idioms are independent and fixed part in language. Because some idioms come from different historic allusions and events, we must take them as a whole to understand and translate. For instance, “to lose one's head” does not mean that somebody has lost his head, but means “to be panic”; “to jumps off the page” does not mean that somebody leaves the page quickly, but means that somebody is extraordinarily intelligent or talented. Idioms as above mentioned must be understood as a whole, and cannot be taken apart at random.

Thirdly, take the characteristic of concordance for example. Phonological harmony is often used in idioms to achieve the purpose of catchy, easy to remember and understand. Alliteration, end rhyme and repetition technique could be often used to increase language phonetic beauty and rhetorical effect in many idioms. Such alliteration idioms as “no root, no fruit”, “part and parcel”, “might and main” and so on. Such end rhyme idioms as “high and dry”, “by hook or by crook”, “man proposes, God disposes”, “great boast, small roast”, and so forth. Such repetition idioms as “step by step”, “neck and neck”, “call a spade a spade”, “heart to heart”, “shoulder to shoulder” and so on. Nevertheless, sometimes in order to achieve the purpose of catchy, both of alliteration and end rhyme are used together in one idiom, for instance, “no money, no honey”, “no pains, no gains”, “no sweat, no sweet” and so on. The characteristic of concordance used in idioms is to increase the aesthetic feeling.

Fourthly, take the characteristic of rhetoric for example. Language of rhetorical means mostly concentrates on idioms. Both English and Chinese idioms have various rhetoric meaning, such as simile, metaphor, metonymy, chiasmus and inversion. Of which metaphor is the most important in figure of speech, most idioms are using visual analogy to make language more lifelike. Idioms with rhetoric are colorful and vivid in meaning, which is rich and varied. **Simile** contains ontology, metaphors and comparing words, for instance, “like a cat on hot bricks”, “as busy as bee”, “as timid as rabbit”, “as cold as a cucumber”, “as cold as a marble” and so on. **Metaphor** contains ontology and metaphor, but no comparing words, such as “have a screw loose”, “have many irons in the fire”, and so on. **Metonymy** is to use something that has close ties to the other things to refer to ontology things. Such as “an old steel in the stable still aspires to gallop a thousand Li”, “actions speak louder than words”, and so on. **Chiasmus** refers to a statement in which you repeat a phrase in a sentence but with the words in the opposite order. Such idioms as “some people eat to live, and others live to eat”, “we will not attack unless we are attacked; if we are attacked, we are sure to counterattack”. **Inversion** indicates that an interchange of position of adjacent objects in a sequence, especially a change in normal word order, such as the placement of a verb before its subject. Such as “a thousand sails pass by sunken ship, ten thousand saplings shoot up beyond the withered tree”, and so on. The meaning expressed in rhetorical idiom forms is rich and varied, which are too many to be listed one by one.

Fifthly, take the characteristic of similarity in metaphorical meaning for example. People's experience and thoughts about the world in many quarters are similar. Although English culture differs from Chinese culture, there are similarities, even the same between these two cultures. For example, all the steel workers in the world, no matter they live in the eastern countries or western countries, have the same experience that “strike while the iron is hot”. Moreover, nearly all peasants know the fact that “as you sow, so shall you reap”. Through the struggle with nature, both the easterners and westerners have come to know that “unity is strength”. Such idioms as “walls have ears”, “burn one's boats”, “add fuel to the flame”, “practice makes perfect”, and so on, are well versed in connotations and figurativeness. What's more, English and Chinese idioms in usage are interlinked, which is conformed to the structure and form of idiom and faithful to the original figurativeness and characteristic.

Sixthly, take the characteristic of the transparent for example. Idioms vary in 'transparency', that is, whether their meaning can be derived from the literal meanings of the individual words. For example, "make up one's mind" is rather transparent in suggesting the meaning 'reach a decision', while "kick the bucket" is far from transparent in representing the meaning 'die'.

Finally yet importantly, all of the characteristics, the semantic unity and the structural stability are mainly included. Each idiom is a semantic unity. For instance, "no practice, no gain in one's wit" means "a fall into the pit, a gain in your wit". Idioms have a very stable structure. The constituents of idioms can not be replaced, deleted or added to, not even an article. If we deleted or added to a word in an idiom, maybe it can affect the meaning we expressed. The order of the word can not be changed, either. Otherwise, it may express a different sense. For example, the two idioms "out of question" and "out of the question" are quite different in meaning. What's more, many idioms can not be grammatically analyzable.

There are so many characteristics in English and Chinese idioms that they cannot be listed all in this paper, but one point needs to be noted here: the common phrase 'idioms and phrases' refers to commonly used groups of words in English. These idioms and phrases are used in specific situations and often used in an idiomatic structure, rather than a figurative sense. Idioms are often full sentences. Phrases, however, are usually made up of a few words and are used as a grammatical unit in a sentence. Here are some examples of common idioms and phrases. "It's raining cats and dogs" is an idiom, which means it is raining heavily, while "at the top of" is a prepositional phrase, "chairman of the board" is a noun phrase, and "by the end of the day" is an adverbial phrase.

III. CULTURE DIFFERENCES

People from different countries speak different languages, keep different value systems, and have different ways of looking on things, which generates cultural differences. However, due to the lack of knowledge of cultural differences, many people fail to understand each other during the actual communicating activities. Idioms have an inseparable relationship with a nation's geographical environment, religious beliefs, historical background, traditional customs, and so on. Therefore, there are definitely some differences between English idioms and Chinese idioms. The difference can be approached from different angles. The author just wants to analyze the differences by religion, historical allusions, and traditional custom of different region.

The first is the religious differences. In China people believe in Buddhism and Taoism, therefore, there are many idioms about these two religions in Chinese, such as "借花献佛(to present Buddha with borrowed flowers)". This frequently used Chinese idiom might have bewildered you if you didn't understand its meaning. Judging from its literal translation, it's not that easy to guess out what exactly it means. 借花(jiè huā) means to borrow flowers, 献佛(xiàn fó) means to present to the Buddha. The original story was about a poor man. He wanted to thank Buddha who helped bring rain to his village in drought (people were superstitious in ancient China). However he was too poor to buy anything to present to Buddha. So he borrowed some money from others and bought flowers to present to Buddha. Today this idiom just means to use other people's stuff to do your own favor. In most cases, it is used positively. The same idioms related to Buddhism and Taoism as "普渡众生(to deliver all living creatures from torment)", "六根清静(to be free from human desires and passions)", "道高一尺, 魔高一丈(As virtue rises one foot, vice rises ten./ The law is strong, but the outlaws are ten times stronger./ While the priest climbs a post, the devil climbs ten) and so on. While in British and American countries, people believe in Christianity. So there are many idioms from Christianity, such as "God help those who help themselves", "The nearer to church, the farther from God", "God sends fortune to fools", "Go to hell", "God's mill goes slowly, but it grind well/ the mills of God grind slowly but sure", "Cleanliness is next to godliness", and so on. For the idioms above, if you want to know what they mean you must know the information about the religions.

The second is historical allusion differences. Both Britain and China have a long history, so there are many idioms originated from historical allusions. These idioms often have simple structures and profound meanings and they cannot be understood or translated from literal meaning. As for the Chinese allusions, most of them have derived from fables and works of different dynasties, such as the Spring and Autumn period, Han Dynasty, Song Dynasty, etc. Some are even from doctrines of both Buddhism and Taoism. For example, the idiom "守株待兔(to wait for windfalls)" derived from a fable of the Warring States Period in China. It is said that there lived a farmer in the state of Song who had a tree stump in his field. One day while working in the fields, a frightened rabbit suddenly dashed out nowhere and bump into the stump accidentally. As a result, it fell dead with its neck broken. The farmer happily took the rabbit home and cooked himself a delicious meal. That night lying on his bed, he thought: "Why do I need to work so hard in the field? All I have to do is to wait for a rabbit to run into the stump each day." So from then on he gave up farming, and simply sat by the stump waiting for another rabbit to come and knocked against it. No more rabbits appeared, however, but he became the laughing-stock in the state of Song. So it is with some other idioms like "螳螂捕蝉, 黄雀在后(to covet gains ahead without being aware of danger behind)", "树大招风(Great trees catch wind)", "四面楚歌(to be besieged on all sides)", and so on, all of which belong to Chinese historical allusions. As for English idioms, some of them have the allusions from three great resources-the Bible, Roman fables, the works of Shakespeare. Some of them come from Roman mythology and the historic events in Europe, which may include colloquialisms like "hit below the belt/ stab in the back", "cut the ground under someone". Some act as catchphrase like "the Trojan Horse", "swan song", "the wolf

may lose his teeth, but never his nature". As regard the idiom "meet one's Waterloo", it derived from a historical event. Just as Alandra Kiko described in *Using English*. com (2012) that there was a battle in Waterloo, in present-day Belgium on June 18th, 1815, which Napoleon lost, and if someone has "met their Waterloo", it means they have been defeated or met their death.

The third is the traditional custom differences of different regions. Idioms in English and Chinese reflect that custom differences are various. Customs are a kind of social phenomenon, which are affected by politics, economy, religion, literary and so forth. Idioms are thus greatly influenced by customs, which concern almost every aspect of social life. Although both Chinese and English people believe that "food the first necessity", the Chinese idioms related to "eat", such as "吃不了兜着走(bear all the consequences)", while the English idioms related to "food", such as "not all bread is baked in one oven". In this idiom, all the words seem simple and easy, yet when combined together, we are really at loss as to its meaning. As the most complex animal, humankind co-exists with other animals in our planet throughout history. Animals have a very close relation with humankind, so idioms influenced by animal words. "Dog" is quite different in the values and ideas of two national cultural traditions. In Chinese, idioms related to dog are almost all negative things, such as "狐朋狗友 (disreputable Gang)", "狼心狗肺 (be as cruel as a wolf)", "狗仗人势 (like a dog threatening people on the strength of its master's power)", "狗急跳墙 (a cornered beast will do something desperate)", etc. While British and American people often regard dogs as loyal partners, dog is commonly used to describe people. Such as, "a lucky dog", "every dog has his day", "not have a dog's chance", "the old dog will not learn new tricks", etc. People from different regions speak different languages, have different festivals, wear different clothes and eat different food and therefore they have different customs.

In a word, studying the cultural differences between east and west can decrease or avoid unnecessary conflicts when we do idiom translation. Culture differences should be handled properly in line with the principles of mutual respect, seeking common ground. The above mentioned idioms can be translated properly only when these cultural differences could be regarded. To deal with cultural differences, first of all, we should have respect for other cultures. In the next place, it is better for translator to learn something about the knowledge of cultural differences. The more we know, the fewer mistakes we make when communicating with people of different cultures. Last but not the least, as the old idiom says, "When in Rome do as the Romans do".

IV. STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN IDIOM TRANSLATION

Idiom translation is not only a language conversion, but also the transplantation of culture. Due to the historical and cultural background, traditional customs and thinking methods, which are significantly different from one country to another, the image, meaning and usage of idioms are also quite different. So idiom translation is one of the most difficult tasks in intercultural communication and language learning. Chinese scholar Liu Tiecheng: "Only in clear understanding on the basis of the source of Chinese and English which have nothing in common in culture origin, can we smoothly carry on translating the idioms both in English and Chinese". Therefore, idiom translation is not only a kind of recreating for art, but also a scientific and philosophical poetry with deep meaning, harmonic tone, and imaginative analogy. It is very difficult to translate a simple foreign literature correctly. How to translate the idioms correctly and appropriately, which matches the regulation and the characteristics of different nations, is the matter not only about the rules of translation, but also the methods. The studies on strategies for idiom translation are of the greatest international significance. Therefore, to master some translation methods and principles may be helpful for both readers and translators.

The first strategy is literal translation. Eugene. A. Nida's translation theory in the book *Language, Culture and Translating* (1993) indicates that the so-called literal translation, means on the basis of the standardization of the translation, on the premise of not causing wrong association or misunderstanding, keep the metaphor of English proverb, the methods of the image and national in color. On the one hand, literal translation can retain the original cultural characteristics; on the other hand, it also can fully spread the primitive culture. Some of the idiom translation has entered into the target language, but most people do not even know that they are from abroad. Such idioms as "blood is thicker than water", "knowledge is power", "you cannot clap with one hand", "easy come easy go", "constant dropping wears away a stone" and so forth, all can be translated directly in Chinese. Some of the idioms and proverbs are the same to the form of expression and meaning. When translate those kinds of idioms, we can use the similar Chinese to translate. Not only can make the reader easy to accept it, but also easy to understand. For recommending these unique expression methods, exotic flowers and rare herbs of foreign countries to China, it only takes the literal translation method to finish the task. Literal translation is the most commonly used in idiom translation. This is the so called "idioms must be expressed by idioms, image by image". Most of idioms are catchphrases, which sum up the essence of human culture accumulation, and touch the human basic life. Therefore, translators can find similar idioms in different languages. In this case, translators can use a set of synonyms to translate English idioms, such as "strike while the iron is hot", "to add fuel to the fire" etc. The above-mentioned idioms, either Chinese or English, literal translation is the basic method.

The second strategy is free translation. As for some of the idioms, literal translation can not be used, because the readers of other countries could neither understand the idioms of the target language's cultural background, nor find the

corresponding idioms of it. For some anecdotes or legends that the proverb involves are unknown by readers from other countries, footnote or note should be added to get further explanation. At this time, translators have to give up idioms' forms and figures of speech, but use the method of free translation to express the idioms of the target language clearly. For examples, the Chinese idiom “一言既出，驷马难追” could only be translated by using the method of free translation rather than literal translation. The free translation “A word spoken is past recalling” is much better than the literal translation “one word let slip and four horses will fail to catch it”. So it is the same with English idioms as “keep one's nose clean”, the free translation refers to “doing everything legally”, which could express the target language clearly, while the literal translation could not convey the exact idea of the target language. The idiom “she was born with a silver spoon in her mouth”, the free translation refers to “she was born in a rich family”, but the literal translation refers to “there is a silver spoon in her mouth when she was born”. The idiom “Every family has at least one skeleton in the cupboard”, the free translation is “every family has its own trouble”, while the literal translation is “every family has a bone structure in its cupboard”, which could not express the rhetorical meaning of the idiom. Another example, the English idiom “don't put your finger in the pie”, if we translate this idiom into Chinese by using literal method, Chinese readers could not understand it at all. The idiom “don't put your finger in the pie” reflects the individualism walk of philosophy which was pursued by English and American society, it warns people not meddle in matters that don't concern you, and caring about one's own matters is the best policy. Moreover, it differs from Chinese walks of philosophy and collectivism pursued by Chinese. The advantage of free translation lies in being succinct and distinct, benefit the style of writing, and prevent some messy cases caused by literal translation from happening. As for the idiom above, the use of literal translation method is to take totally ineffective measures, even hurt purpose in word, cause the disadvantage of misunderstanding, so the free translation is the best.

The third strategy is abridged translation. In Chinese idioms, there is the paralleling dual structure, which uses two different metaphors to express the same meaning. In this case, translators can use abridged translation method to remove the repeating sections, such as the Chinese idiom “wall of copper and wall of iron ” should be translated into English “wall of bronze”, one word “wall” used here to stand for two, one word “bronze” used here to stand for the two kinds of metal “copper and iron”. Another example the Chinese idiom “long sigh and short groan” should be translated into “sighing deeply”. The two examples illustrate the fact that the same meaning of idioms should be expressed in different methods; for the idioms like the above mentioned, the abridged translation method is the best choice.

The fourth strategy is borrowing translation. As humans, no matter what kind of nations, they inevitably have some similarities, in the feelings of things and social experiences, so there is a small amount of the same or similar idioms in different languages, not only whose literal meaning and image meaning are similar, but also connotative meaning is identical. That is to say, either the literal meaning or the image meaning of such idioms conveys the same cultural information. Translators can use borrowing translation method to carry out the mutual translation in such idioms. Such as the English idiom “practice makes perfect ” is just the same as the Chinese idiom “熟能生巧”, and the Chinese idiom “破釜沉舟” is also the same as the English idiom “burn one's boats”, which originate from the military strategy of the two countries, so the usage and meaning are the same. Therefore, by faithfully expressing the meaning of the original idioms, translators try to keep the vivid image, the rhetorical effect and the ethnic characteristics of the original idioms.

When translating English idioms, translators should adopt different translation methods according to the different their characteristics. However, idioms contain some different ethnic characteristics and cultural information. Sometimes even the same idioms in different contexts have different kinds of translation results, which reflect the people's different views on cultural life habits. Sometimes even one idiom can be translated by using more than two kinds of translation methods, such as the Chinese idiom “木已成舟” can be translated by free translation and borrowing translation method “the milk is spilled”, and can also be translated by literal translation “the wood is already made into a boat—what's done is done”. (Wang Tao, 2001, p.388) In order to make the idioms better understood and used, translators should master not only the basic cultural elements and characteristics of the idioms, but also some basic translation techniques.

V. PRINCIPLES EMPLOYED IN IDIOM TRANSLATION

Translation is an art, which is a bilingual art. As there are many differences in vocabulary and syntax between the oriental and occidental language, it is not easy to do translation well, especially the translation of idioms. Therefore, in order to keep the original English idioms in step with the Chinese translation, some principles in translating idioms must be followed. Hence, based on faithfully expressing the meaning of the original idioms, translators should try to keep the vivid image of the original idioms, rhetorical effect and ethnic characteristics.

The first principle is not to take idioms too literally. Some English idioms have a distinct image and metaphor, and therefore, do not translate idioms too literally although literal translation is the most basic method. For example, “catch a crab” from the literal meaning, it means to have caught hold of a crab, but here as an idiom, it refers to that, the paddling into the water is too deep and out of balance. Take some other idioms for example, the idiom “smell a rat”, the figurative translation is “to detect that something is not what it seems”, not the literal meaning “to get the smell of a rat”. The idiom “bring down the house”, for literal translation is “to cause a house to collapse”, for figurative translation is “(for a performance or a performer) to excite the audience into making a great clamor of approval”. The idiom “count one's chickens before they are hatched” assumes that something will be successful before it is certain. There are also

some English idioms in animal metaphors, whose translation should not be done literally, either. Take the animal “dog” for example, “a gay dog” and “a dumb dog”, here the word ‘dog’ refers to a person rather than an animal, which means separately “a person who has a feeling of happiness” and “a person who seldom speaks or talks to others”. These above mentioned idiom examples prove that some idioms could not be translated literally.

The second principle is that the national color should be noted first for idiom translation. Ethnic idioms refer to the national culture (history, geography, religion, custom, etc.) of color idioms. Idioms are the essence of language; it contains ethical color and distinctive culture connotation. In idiom translation, translators should pay attention to keep different ethnic color, and do remember not to translate idioms with Chinese national color into the idioms with English national colors, and vice versa. For instance, the Chinese idiom “情人眼里出西施”, according to traditional Chinese history “西施” refers to the name of a beautiful girl in Spring-Autumn dynasty, who has been regarded as the representative of Chinese beauties ever since then. The English people do not know about it, therefore the English Translation for this Chinese idiom should be “beauty lies in lover's eyes” but not “Xi Shi lies in lover's eyes”. Otherwise, it would make the English readers puzzled and some even would generate conflicts with the original context. Take English idioms for example, both the idiom “talk of an angel and you'll hear his wings” and the idiom “talk of the devil, and he is sure to appear” express the same meaning as the Chinese idiom “talk of Chao Chao, and he will come”. The words “an angel”, “the devil” and “Chao Chao” in these idioms are quite different but they have the same function, and act as the same representatives in its own history allusions. Another kind of example, the English idiom “never offer to teach fish to swim”, the literal meaning in Chinese refers to “不必教鱼儿游水”, but according to the traditional Chinese culture, the literary quotation “不要班门弄斧” is quite related to it, so this is the best translation. In this way, the addition of the different national color could be avoided.

The third principle is that language artistic features should be noted in idiom translation. In the process of translating idioms, translators should not only faithfully express the ideological content of the original, but also maintain the original rhetorical effect as far as possible. For example, the English idioms either “the rotten apple injures its neighbors” or “the rotten apple spoils his companion” expresses the same idea as “if one of the apples got rotted in the basket, the others would get rotted one after another”, the translation for Chinese in metaphorical meaning is “城门失火, 殃及鱼池”, but it doesn't maintain its original faithfully expression, so if translator want to keep both faithfully expressing the ideological content of the original as well as the original rhetorical effect, the best translation should be “一条鱼腥一锅汤”. So it is the same with some other idioms, such as “grasp all, lose all”, the translation “样样抓, 样样丢” is more faithful to the ideological content of the original, while the translation “贪多必失” contains both of the faithful expression and the original rhetorical effect, which embodies the language artistic features.

Idiom translation plays a very important role in foreign language translation, the translator's task lies in the content form of the original work, and as an entity, reproduces completely in another kind of language. Therefore, the result of correct idiom translation and using the expression skillfully can help us translate accurately, and by contrasting the idioms translation, some principles could be found. The study of these principles can help us understand idiom correctly and deal with them appropriately.

VI. CONCLUSION

Idioms are a unique and fixed part of the language, and also the essence of language. They are frequently used in daily life, which are concise and vivid. Due to different cultural backgrounds, the English and Chinese idioms embody the great cultural differences, which bring difficulties to translation. The translation of idioms should not only have a scientific spirit, but also a style of art, and then make translation reproduce the original beauty. In addition, a good translation of idioms can achieve the purpose of promoting the communication between English and Chinese culture.

By the study of idiom characteristics, by the analysis of culture differences on idioms, it is clear that there are different strategies to take and different principles to follow in idiom translation, but there is no certain formula and absolutely correct definition about this. Base on the principle of the unity of form and content in the different conditions, translators should take flexible ways to translate. Only by using proper strategies, following suitable principles and proficiency in understanding general situation and features of idioms, could translators maintain the original characteristics of the idioms and express their meaning clearly and correctly.

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