

A Comparison of Chinese and British Tea Cultures from the Perspective of Cross-Cultural Communication and the “Tea Language” Translation

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Abstract: As the Chinese saying goes, “The seven necessities of life: firewood, rice, oil, salt, soy sauce, vinegar and tea”, which shows the important place the tea occupies in the hearts of the Chinese. With the advent of globalization, countries all over the world have gradually become an organically integrated economic and cultural whole, and China's tea has travelled across the ocean to the west, developing a unique and exotic western tea culture. Despite the fact that British tea comes from China, there are significant differences in tea culture between the two countries. This paper explores the deeper reasons behind the differences between Chinese and British tea culture through a comparative analysis and put forward some strategies and methods for the translation of “tea language” based on these cultural differences. The differences between Chinese and British tea culture are discussed in terms of the development of tea culture, tea drinking etiquette and the spirit of the tea ceremony, which are created by the differences in cultural background and ideology. Analyzing Chinese and British tea culture from different aspects enables us to make better use of tea culture and observe tea drinking etiquette in cross-cultural communication, reduce the language barrier formed in translation and understanding, and reduce the cultural conflict, thus promoting the exchange and development between Chinese and British tea culture and making tea culture shine on the world stage.

Keywords: Intercultural communication, Chinese and British tea culture, Tea language, cultural background, Social interaction.

1. Introduction

Tea is not only one of the three major beverages in the world today, but also a traditional cultural symbol. As we all know, China is the birthplace of tea and tea culture, and tea plays a very important role in Chinese social life. With historical events such as the Silk Road and Zheng He's voyages to the west, opportunities for exchange between China and the world gradually increased, and the tea trade began to develop, with tea being spread to the west and sought after by the western society as a result. Because the cultural background of Western countries and China is quite different, tea has been combined with local culture to form a special western tea culture. British tea culture can be said to be one of the important representatives of western tea culture. With the acceleration of globalization, more and more people begin to realize the importance of the concept of “cross-culture”. Different tea cultures inevitably lead to various obstacles when people from different cultural backgrounds communicate with each other. Comparing Chinese and English tea cultures from the cross-cultural perspective and discussing the translation of “tea language” will help people understand the existing forms and characteristics of British tea culture, thus understanding its culture and language, avoiding cross-cultural communication conflicts and promoting the spread of Chinese tea culture in the world.

This paper mainly studies the tea culture of China and Britain, compares the tea culture of the two countries with their own ontological studies, and finds out the reasons for the communication conflict between the two tea cultures. Analyze and summarize the matters needing attention in tea culture communication on different occasions, try to reduce the probability of conflict and make communication activities smoother. The research methods such as literature analysis,

comparative analysis and comprehensive analysis are mainly adopted in this paper.

2. The Comparison of Chinese and British Tea Culture

2.1. The development of tea culture

Tea, as a beverage, has a history of over 2000 years in China, discovering by the Shen Nong and becoming well-known through written records by the Duke of Zhou. And the tea culture began to prevail in China mainly during the Tang dynasty (A.D.618-907), which was the heyday of China's economic development in ancient times. Whether in commerce or foreign trade, it was a period of prosperity for China, and all kinds of handmade products, including tea, were exported to overseas. As a result of the economic development and the improvement of people's living standards, the public also spent more time on spiritual pursuits, so tea poetry and tea meditation flourished during this period, which laid a solid foundation for the development of tea culture in later years.

The development of tea culture in Britain began in the 16th century. Before that, there was no tea in Britain, and the royal family and ordinary laborers took wine or coffee as their main daily drinks. Tea first appeared in Britain only with medicinal function, and the wind of drinking tea was promoted by Catherine, Queen of King Charles II of England. Because of the leading role of the royal family, tea gradually became popular in the British courts. With the continuous development and prosperity of the British economy, tea has begun to be accepted by ordinary people, and then tea culture has developed. In fact, tea was initially treated as a refreshing drink and did not rise to the cultural level. With the promotion of tea-drinking activities, tea has been integrated into British

society and people's ideas, and then has become an important branch of British culture.

2.2. Tea-drinking etiquette

In all parts of China, tea drinking etiquette is different, which can be described as all-encompassing and colorful, but in the final analysis, it is inseparable from the word “polite and orderly”. In Beijing, when the host pours the tea, the guests should immediately stand up, hold the teacups with both hands and say “thank you”. In southern areas such as Guangdong and Guangxi provinces, after the host serves tea, the guest should gently tap the desktop three times with his/her right finger to show gratitude. In other regions, if the guest wants to continue drinking the tea, he/she should leave some tea in the teacup, and the host will continue to add tea when he sees it. If you drink up all the tea in the cup, the host may think that you will not drink any more, so he will not add tea to you. In terms of the tea pouring etiquette, it inherits the hierarchical concept of “ruler and his subjects, father and son” in Chinese Confucianism, pays attention to humility, courtesy and order, and requires the younger generation to pour tea for the elders, the subordinates to pour tea for the superiors and the master to pour tea for the guests.

British tea-drinking etiquette reflects the creative spirit, freedom consciousness and individualism of western society. Compared with Chinese people, British people drink tea with strong purpose and utilitarianism. They usually drink tea either for work needs, or to pass the time, or for communication needs, or for the habit formed by physical function needs. For this strong utilitarianism, especially for the purpose of social communication, their tea-drinking etiquette is extremely particular. At the tea party, men usually wear formal suits or tuxedos, while women wear evening dresses or suits. They drink tea with a very proper posture, small sips, without making a sound, so as to show the gentleman's gentlemanly manner and the lady's ladylike temperament.

2.3. Tea ceremony spirit

After 5000 years of development and evolution, China tea culture has integrated the ideological essence of “Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism” in feudal society, and sublimated tea culture into the ideological realm of Chinese national values, among which “golden mean, harmony between man and nature, meditation” and other ideas pay attention to the characteristics of blending with nature in tea culture. At the same time, both Confucianism and Taoism advocate inaction. Tea can make people return to nature, and even people can not only get sensory satisfaction in drinking tea, but also realize the life realm of harmony between man and nature. It can be said that this spiritual connotation in Chinese tea culture has been one of the most important ways to entrust the spirit of lofty ideals in ancient China.

Under the advancement of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, China's tea culture can be summarised as the four true meanings of “He Jing Yi Zhen”, of which the so-called “He” (which can also be understood as “harmony”) is the core idea of China's tea culture and the soul of the development of China's tea ceremony, while “Jing” is the most important method for the study of China's tea ceremony. “Yi” represents the real spiritual feeling in the practice of Chinese tea ceremony, and the “Zhen” is the ultimate goal of Chinese tea culture. It can be said that drinking tea in Chinese is not a mere material enjoyment, but has higher emotional

and spiritual requirements or hopes.

When tea was introduced into Britain, it was a period of rapid development of British national strength. Different from our country's idea of attaching importance to agriculture, industry and commerce, Britain mainly relies on commercial civilization and marine economy to promote the development of national economy. Therefore, during the formation of tea culture, Chinese people pay attention to the harmonious coexistence between man and nature, while Britain lays stress on the conquest of nature. They have accumulated a lot of wealth in their continuous exploration of nature, which also strengthens their determination to transform nature. This can also be shown from the different preferences of the two peoples for tea. Our Chinese people pay attention to the concept of harmony between man and nature, so they prefer to drink green tea with fragrance, while the British people pay more attention to the conquest of nature, so the British residents prefer fermented black tea. Because China's agricultural reclamation needs the cooperative spirit of a large number of laborers, this has created the concept that Chinese residents attach importance to collective spirit. British residents tend to be more egocentric. British housewives often enjoy happy afternoon-tea alone in the afternoon, while Chinese residents tend to enjoy tea with their friends, which is also the different external manifestations caused by the different connotations of tea culture in the two countries.

3. Analysis of differences between Chinese and English tea culture

3.1. Cultural background

Chinese traditional philosophy and culture are rooted in farming civilization, and agricultural development is closely related to nature. Therefore, Chinese people have a natural worship and dependence on nature, which also promotes the thought of “harmony between man and nature” to become an important viewpoint in Chinese traditional philosophy and culture and Chinese tea culture. Secondly, China had long been in a feudal society, where a self-sufficient natural economy dominated and a small peasant economy had long been the mainstay. The self-sufficient natural economy is concerned with the rules of letting nature take its course and living in harmony with nature. In China, the way of drinking tea is mostly pure drinking without any auxiliary materials, and the environment of drinking tea is mostly quiet and close to nature, which is also related to the integration of traditional Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism in China into tea culture.

Britain was a country that later emerged, and factors such as climate and terrain were not conducive to agricultural development. Therefore, Britain was enthusiastic about industrial development, which led to the first Industrial Revolution. Different development models inevitably create distinct tea cultural connotations. In the process of getting along with nature, they put more emphasis on using nature, conquering nature, adapting nature to their industrial development, and trying to transform nature by mastering its secrets. Therefore, in Britain, we often see some tea drinks with auxiliary materials such as sugar and milk, and they like to drink fermented black tea. The tea set they used, bone China, was also transformed from animal ashes mixed with clay. The state of life development that conquers nature makes them use tea as a means of communication, instead of conforming to nature.

3.2. Way of thinking

China is a country with collectivist values. Collectivism values culture emphasizes the value orientation of social collectivism, common interests, harmony, unity and cooperation. The "harmony" contained in the ideological connotation of tea culture in China is the best embodiment of this value. Whether it is harmony between man and nature or harmonious coexistence between people, tea culture requires us to live in harmony with others calmly, and resolve conflicts with others in the form of drinking tea. "Make friends with tea" means making more like-minded friends by drinking tea. Collectivism values require people to treat others with courtesy and restrain the host and guests with tea ceremony, which is to give everyone a relatively harmonious tea drinking environment, create a harmonious tea drinking atmosphere, and let the collective interests give full play to its role. This kind of courtesy means respect, which is an expression of the host's respect for the guest and an expression of the guest's respect for the host. Chinese people pay more attention to other people's feelings, consider other people's ideas, and respect each other is the main content of this tea ceremony.

Britain is a country with individualistic values, which emphasizes the independent values orientation of individual spirit, individual interests and individual achievements. In this mode of social development, the emphasis is on individual ideas rather than collective ideas, which requires the expression of individual views and innovative behaviors. Their personal goals should take precedence over family and collective, and they will also think that they belong to multiple groups and will change their membership according to different needs. Under this individualistic value, personal decisions are emphasized and respected, which affects the way British people communicate with others. People in this mode of communication pay more attention to their personal interests and they believe that individuals work hard solely for their own benefit, and only after considering their own interests will they consider the collective interests. When faced with conflicts, people will think of competition, instead of taking corresponding measures to avoid conflicts as China people do. They believe that individual achievements are far greater than collective interests. This personal value orientation has also been integrated into the British tea culture. The British people are very picky about the choice of tea sets, which need to be beautiful in appearance and practical. A beautiful tea set is also a symbol of status in the eyes of the British. When inviting friends to visit their homes, they will also treat them with courtesy, and the guests will reciprocate with courtesy. Moreover, this ritual system is also very strict, but they abide by it not to respect others like China people, but to avoid being laughed at by others.

4. Tea language translation

Due to the British people's extreme enthusiasm for tea, tea culture with western cultural characteristics has gradually emerged, and it has begun to deeply affect the English language system, and a large number of words about tea have been produced and spread. In recent years, with the integration and exchange of world cultures, tea vocabulary is an indispensable part of China's cultural vocabulary output, and its English translation has attracted more attention from the cultural field and related scholars. It is of great significance to study the translation strategies and causes of

tea vocabulary for the development and inheritance of Chinese language and culture. According to cultural differences, the author puts forward the following translation strategies for the translation of tea words (tea names and extended words of tea):

4.1. Tea names

For some expressions of tea names that already exist in English, translators should adopt contrastive translation instead of relying on their own imagination. Some well-known tea names, such as "Jingshan" and "Oolong", which have become historical terms, enjoying a reputation at home and abroad, and are unique phenomena in the source language. Transliteration can fully reflect the culture and customs of a region and promote the spread and exchange of tea culture. Such as Oolong Tea, Xihu/West Lake Longjing Tea, Biluochun Tea and so on.

The sources of some tea names are complicated, and there are myths and legends or folk stories hidden behind them, so it is difficult to express their tea names in simple English vocabulary. For example, "Tieguanyin" and "Dahongpao Tea", it is said that when picking tea every year, according to the custom, incense is burned to worship the heaven first, and then monkeys are put on red robes to pick tea. Therefore, transliteration and annotation should be adopted when translating the tea name, and it should be translated into "Dahongpao Tea", and then annotations should be added for explanation. This way, Western people can better understand the origin of the name of Chinese tea.

4.2. The extended words of tea

The basic meaning of "tea" includes tea, tea tree and drinking tea. Tea is combined with other words to form colorful tea words and phrases. For example, tea set, tea ceremony and tea room are all derivatives of the basic meaning of tea; However, some tea phrases jump out of the basic meaning of tea and gradually appear many extended meanings. For example, "粗茶淡饭" is used to describe "poor meal or simple life"; "人走茶凉" is used to describe the human relationships. These words have jumped out of the basic meaning of tea, so when translating these tea language, free translation can better convey the speaker's real meaning. Such as the "人走茶凉" can be translated into "the superficiality of human relationships". And tea also has rich metaphorical meanings in English. For example, "tea party" is used to mean "marijuana party" in addition to tea party itself; "tea room" originally meant "a place to drink tea", but now it is more used to mean "gay party". As a verb, tea also means "drink" and is often used in fixed structures such as "teaed up". Of course, tea is also used in certain phrases, such as "a cup of tea", which means not only literally, but also "something you like" and "a tempest in a teapot" does not mean "a storm in a teapot", but means "making a big deal".

It can be seen that after tea spread across the ocean to Britain, some tea words with rich connotations were also formed among the British people, and these words are very different from the traditional Chinese tea languages. When communicating with British people about tea culture, we must pay attention to the application and translation of these escaped words. Only by adopting appropriate translation strategies and combining tea culture background knowledge can Chinese and British people better understand and inherit tea culture and avoid conflicts and misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication.

5. Conclusion

Tea is a worldwide beverage, which can not only bring people physical health, but also spiritual pleasure. Chinese tea culture is simple and natural, while British tea culture is novel and luxurious, each country has its own characteristics. The different cultural backgrounds and values jointly promote the tea culture of China and Britain to move forward, and at the same time, it also makes the tea culture of China and Britain have great differences. Analysing the tea culture of China and Britain from different aspects will enable us to make better use of the tea culture in cross-cultural communication, reduce the mistakes in the translation and understanding, and reduce the probability of communication conflicts, so as to promote the integration and development of the Chinese and the British tea cultures.

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