

# Chinese Translation and Effect Appreciation of Special Sentences and Proverbs in English Works

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**Abstract:** Special sentences and proverbs occupy an exclusive position in the field of language art. Like poetry and other literary works, they are the essence of language. They contain rich national cultural connotation with refined characters, which are not only a phenomenon of characters, but also an art culture. Whether in Chinese or English, this effect can show its strong cultural complex. In English works, the use of proverbs and special sentences undoubtedly makes literary works more attractive. However, in the transformation of Chinese and English cultures, people will experience the original charm brought by languages through the cultural infiltration, the emotional fusion and the communication of the times.

## 1. Artistic Expression in Cultural Background

### 1.1 Inheritance and Infiltration of History

Each word has its unique cultural and historical complex, which records its own historical footprints. In ancient Chinese literary works, Du Mu wrote “A singsong girl, not knowing the bitterness of a conquered kingdom, Sings Flowers of the Backyard on the river’s other side”, expressing the feeling of helplessness; Sima Guang wrote “Being wreathed in mist, wind and rain roar; The former imperial capital is now only a few sites left”, showing a deep sigh; Xin Qiji wrote “Below the Gloomy Terrace flow two rivers clear. How many tears of refugees are swallowed here!”, showing infinite sadness. When these words and sentences with historical memory come to the literati, it is easy to make people sigh for the rise and fall of their country.

The same is true of these words in English. As a carrier of cultural background, proverbs and special sentences in English contain historical feelings in a certain period and bear the mission entrusted by time. When the historical process of a nation is engraved in these concise sentences, they make history reappear to the maximum extent, and pass on countless sighs in history. No matter laughter or tears, people can’t help reading them again.

In English works, proverbs and special sentences have been used again and again. In the Chinese version of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, the special sentences are translated into concise and rhyming words: “He chu shi ya shu, xi la, luo ma, jia tai ji?” “Jiang tu bian cheng le sha mo, hao meng cheng kong”. When the ancient civilization began to fade away in history, the world changed from generation to generation. When emperors looked down at every patch of land under their feet, they thought they would always prosper with the rising sun. However, these things were like dreams and good dreams would eventually be broken. We seem to see a long projection of a great empire, reflected in simple but extraordinary words, silent. This is the unique charm of special sentences, and also the so-called excellent writing method of translators.

The *Bible* says: “When Greek meets Greek, and then was the tug-of-war.” We are very glad that the author did not translate it literally as “one Greek meets another Greek”, but through free translation and domestication translation as “There must be a fierce battle when two men contend”. When the Greek myth of invincibility has been dried up by history, what remains is not only a simple criticism or praise, but also a reminder and inheritance from history. Such a Chinese translation can leave us more artistic enjoyment.

When these proverbs and special sentences become historical memories, every word should not

be forgotten.

## 1.2 Cultural Differences and Fusion

No matter in English or Chinese, because of the different regional customs, each nation also has its own culture. For example, traditional Chinese Confucian culture holds that “human nature is good” and advocates “don’t do to others what you don’t want others to do to you”, while in the Western Christian society, what they value is “human nature is evil” and they believe that “people impose what they want to do on others”. In Chinese proverbs, there is “A dog’s mouth emits no ivory (A filthy mouth cannot utter decent language)”, while in Western English, the preference for dogs is often seen from proverbs, for example, “Every dog has his day.” There are different understandings of culture itself between China and the West. In this case, sometimes translation will inevitably fall into a circle without proof, that is, the argument between domestication and literal translation for thousands of years.

Differences always exist, but cultural differences should not be an obstacle to cultural exchanges. Romantic feelings in Chinese never fear time, distance and any differences. Whether it’s Wang Bo’s “So long as we remain bosom friends in our heart of hearts, We’ll still feel like neighbors despite the distance apart”, or Zhang Jiuling’s “People who know each other well can be neighbors even if they are thousands of miles apart”, Chinese traditional culture tells us that the exchange of human civilization is just that even though each other is far away, it makes people feel close. Even if culture is a gap across time and distance, when English becomes Chinese characters, they can also precipitate its own unique flavor through the translator’s ingenious blend and accommodation.

In Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*, there is a saying that “All that glitters is not gold”. It seems that there is a certain contradiction between it and the Chinese saying that “if it is gold, it will glitter”. In fact, it is not. From the context of Shakespeare’s book, it can be seen that Shakespeare’s words emphasize the pride of the incompetent, while the Chinese proverb emphasizes that the capable must be recognized. The translator will add “beautiful language, not all are good words” after this sentence in translation. It seems that we can understand the meaning of “half a jar of water can be thumping” in Chinese proverbs. As for the Chinese proverb about gold, Shakespeare’s another proverb can also explain it very well, that is, “That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet”. The alternative understanding of Chinese and English proverbs brings us more feelings of beauty and a sense of relief.

These differences give us different understanding of culture, or shallow or confused. However, perhaps because of the existence of differences, when we really understand English, we feel more meaningful and profound.

## 2. Artistic Expression of Emotional Fusion

### 2.1 Mutual Understanding with the Author and Characters

In literary works, the use of sentences inevitably has a certain relationship with the characters in the story. In other words, the existence of these sentences expresses the thoughts and feelings of the characters deliberately portrayed by the author. They influence and comfort each other in the story. For example, the poem “Although I am in Jiangzhou, my heart is in Liangshan; Wandering in all corners of the country, I often lamented that I wasted my time; If I realize my lofty aspirations in the future; I will dare to laugh at Huang Chao” in *Water Margin* expresses Song Jiang’s open-minded character, the poem “Used to see the plain color, just know the bustling bright” in *Dream of the Red Chamber* shows Xue Baochai’s ambition, and the poem “Who dye forest maple leaves red as drunk, not autumn frost but tears of leaving people” in *Romance of the Western Chamber* expresses Cui Yingying’s helplessness. These sentences also reflect the author’s mood when expressing certain characters’ personalities, so that readers can better understand the deep meanings conveyed in the works.

First of all, the clever translation of proverbs and special sentences helps to shape the general outline of the characters. In English novels, plays and other works, they concentrate on the main

points, construct the initial images of characters under the background of the big times, and lay the foreshadow for later details and descriptions, throughout the full text. Whether the character is Daiyu who “acts like a weak willow supporting the wind” or Baoyu who “searches for sorrow for no reason, and sometimes pretends to be crazy”, the description is concise and comprehensive under the rendering of these sentences.

Secondly, the skillful translation of proverbs and special sentences helps to express the characters’ feelings. Behavior characteristics and emotional expression are two basic ways to create characters. Especially in short stories, due to the limitation of length, it is impossible for the author to render the dialogue between characters with many paragraphs. At this time, it is necessary to give play to the brief and clear function of proverbs or special sentences to achieve the effect of getting twice the result with half the effort. For example, in *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert has a profound psychological description of Madame Bovary. In Li Jianwu’s translation, it is “Ta ai hai zhi ai hai de jing tao hai lang, ai qing cao jin jin ai qing cao bian sheng yu fei xu zhi jian”. In other versions, it is also translated as “Ta ai hai, jin zhi ai ta de kuang tao nu lang; ta ai qing cao, jin zhi ai na dian zhui yu fei xu zhi jian de qing cao”. We can’t prove which translation method is better. When a simple “love” special sentence is translated by Li Jianwu, it is not only literal translation, but also the use of Chinese character skills to overlay “love”, and we can more experience Emma’s paranoia and her own romance. Flaubert was in great pain when he wrote about Madame Bovary’s died. The author and the characters’ emotions had been integrated, and the translator’s emotional integration could really portray Emma’s love, which was the real classic.

Finally, the ingenious translation of proverbs and special sentences helps to arouse readers’ resonance. The classic proverb of Anna Karenina “All happy families are happy alike, all unhappy families are unhappy in their own way” is deeply rooted in people’s hearts. The classic Chinese translations of *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and *The Red and the Black* are also well known. These words string together our first ignorant years of tenderness. Through the translator’s empathy with the characters and the author, the emotion in the book deeply trigger our hearts. We are moved to tears for the emotional gathering and dispersion of protagonists, and we are also fascinated by the sentences translated into Chinese characters. No matter how many times we read them, they are still quietly flashing a dim light in our memory. From this perspective, proverbs and special sentences are also one of the ways to create classic works.

## 2.2 Fusion with Life Memory

Words are both art and life. We can experience different lives, and different joys and sorrows in words. In Chinese literary stories, there are Tao Yuanming’s carefree mood of “Picking asters near the eastern fence at will; Leisurely see the south mountain”, the poem of “The floating clouds are light as the wadding, the life as the dream is light as the cloud”, and the poem “Even three miles away from home, customs and habits are not the same”, which expresses the author’s looking back to his hometown and the exclamation of the vast land.

These words are imperceptibly influencing our life with a silent attitude, making our emotions generated in life have a kind of dispensable but indispensable connection with these words. We can’t deny that we are comprehending the charm of life in such a text life. English proverbs also integrate people’s feelings and life in the Western English world. After the refinement of Chinese culture again, we have also realized the art that words bring to our life.

In Western classical literature, the soul function of these special sentences and proverbs to the text is indelible. For example, in Liang Shiqiu’s translation of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, there is “Qian yan cuo tuo, lai ri wu duo, er shi li shu, qing lai wen wo, shuai cai ku yang, qing chun yi guo”. Such translation integrates the beauty of Chinese characters rather than the simplicity of English. Time goes by like this. The trace left by the young woman’s kissing is just like youth, sweet and exciting. Time is fleeting. We seem to smell the lingering fragrance of youth in the translator’s works. There are surging of the poem “Don’t you see the Yellow River pouring from heaven, Rushing to the sea, never to return?” and the wordless sigh of “Spring’s rosy color fades from forest flowers; Too soon, too soon”. The understanding of special English sentences and proverbs brought

to us by translators is not only a simple sigh of the fleeting time, but also a perception of life.

For life feelings, there is also a deeper expression in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The classic translation of Shakespeare's "To be or not to be, this is a question" is "Sheng cun hai shi hui mie? Zhe shi ge wen ti". The classic translation clearly expresses Hamlet's pain and doubt about life, and combines literal translation with free translation. He hesitates whether he should suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune or take arms against a sea of troubles. What we see here is the constant questioning of the value of life.

The translator's vivid interpretation of the English classics brings us into a different world. No matter how the form of life changes, these words exist in our memory in the most profound form, perhaps not classic, but irreplaceable. The translator's function is to depict them in our life again and again, bringing us the most real and precious enjoyment.

### 3. Artistic Expression under the Communication of the Times

Characters play an irreplaceable role in the changing times. Culture is not unchangeable. In the changing times, the role of words also changes with its changes. But their essential function, which is to spread information, will not change, and they will update their function of spreading information over time.

The proverbs and special sentences in English works, as a special form of writing, should also have this function. In translation, they should not be limited to the nation and region, but should communicate and complement with more cultures. They should enlarge this function in the society, so that history, culture and human emotion can be inherited and carried forward, so as to achieve a function of time communication.

As an important part of the history of human civilization, the Bible has been translated into more than 2000 languages and distributed all over the world, among which there are several Chinese versions. Its unique charm makes it give out unique fragrance both at home and abroad. One of the proverbs is translated as: "Shi jian shi ge duo cai duo yi de biao yan zhe. Ta neng zhan chi fei xiang, neng kuo bu qian jin, neng zhi yu chuang shang, neng xiao shi er qu, ye neng jie shi zhen xiang". Time is the greatest art in the world. The past time will not disappear, but it can slowly fade the memory. All life and everything in life are silent in its dim light and shadow, waiting for the future to open, as Haruki Murakami said: "The lost are lost, those who have met will meet again". What it conveys to us is not only the truth of history, but also the communication of human civilization, emotion and soul that crosses the time gap. Therefore, the translator's mission is not only to achieve unity with the article, but also to achieve unity with the times.

In the *New Testament*, there is another classic special sentence translated as "In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it". When the light of Jesus shines in the dark, those who accept him will have eternal life. The translator embellished the text with rhyme, gave full play to his literary talent, and described the core ideas of Christian theology. There is also a saying: "It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails". The Chinese version of this sentence makes many people become Christians, which is enough to show its charm. Love never fails, and the charm of love will be spread by the times, generation after generation.

### 4. Conclusions

Proverbs and special sentences bring unique beauty and enjoyment to both the literary world and human civilization. Whether it is the infiltration of culture, the fusion of emotion, or the homage to the communication of the times, it has unfolded a magnificent picture of civilization for us. In this picture, the magnificence of history, the tenderness of emotion, and the plainness of life are all depicted in the light and shadow of these sentences, silent but dazzling. When Chinese culture is integrated in this world, what we see is the great charm that words bring to us.

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