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## Chapter One

### Introduction

What is a proverb? The definition by *Longman Modern English Dictionary* is 揆 brief familiar maxim of folk wisdom, usually compressed in form, often involving a bold image and frequently a jingle that catches the memory. The definition given by *辞海* is: 揆焘铜囊恢郑 脍杏倭窠涑募蛄吠了锥 挥幸庖宓挠裸洹 4 螻誉从橙嗣裆 罟投氛 木 楞H纭 硕嗔 膂粕降梗 谏耸安窕鸱妮摺 取 Q 栝模彩敲窠湮难 囊恢中问健 An English patron named Robert South defined proverb in his book *Sermons* like this: What a proverb, but the experience and observation of several ages, gathered and summed up in one expression.<sup>1</sup> Wang Qin, in his book *谚语. 歇后语概论*, defines proverb in this way, 揆栝锺侨嗣祥褐谏 瞳氛 木 樽芙? 是具有传授经验和教训

劝戒功能，流传于人民群众口头中的现成语。<sup>2</sup>

From these definitions, we may find out the common grounds shared by different definers. That is, a proverb, which succinctly sums up human experience and observation of the world, states a general truth and gives advice or warning. A proverb, often involving a bold image, musical rhythm and compressed form, can bring reality and vividness to the readers and so they are very easy to remember.

There are many proverbs about proverbs themselves. Some of them are about the values of proverbs such as *A proverb has contents of gold; Proverbs are the wisdom of the ages*<sup>3</sup>; 名花添春色, 谚语增智慧; 十句谚语十句真。<sup>4</sup> From them we may see that proverbs have something in them and they can give people valuable advice or warning. Some proverbs are about their effect on language such as *Proverbs are the lamps to words; A proverb is an ornament to language*; 泉水最清, 谚语最精; 美丽的季节是春天, 美丽的语言是谚语。 These proverbs reveal that proverbs can make language more colorful and beautiful. Still, some others are about the origin of proverbs as *Proverbs are the daughter of daily life; Proverbs are the children of experience*; 丰收在劳动中获得, 谚语在实践中获得; 蓓蕾在枝叶上孕成, 谚语在生活中提炼。

Because proverbs are the summing up of folk wisdom and they are usually very pithy, they have universal appeal. People love to pick up proverbs when they try to reason things out and the proper use of proverbs can make their views more convincing. Proverbs are the cream of a language and they are 搯he wisdom of the streets and the alley? Lord John Rushell, who was the Premier Minister of England during the period of 1846-1852, once said, 搯 proverb is one man搯 wit and all men搯 wisdom.?The great writer Francis Bacon also spoke highly of proverbs, 搯 genius wit and spirit of a nation are discovered by their proverbs.?And proverbs also won the enthusiastic approval of William Shakespeare, the great writer: A proverb never stale in thrifty mind.<sup>5</sup> English people comment their proverbs like this: What flowers are to gardens, spices to food, gems to a garment and stars to heaven, such are proverbs interwoven in the speech.<sup>6</sup>

Proverbs are the crystal of the national wisdom and experience. They are an important part of a national language and they appropriately reflect the relation between culture and language. They have been connected closely with the national characteristics ever since their coming into being and in their later development. Proverbs reflect many aspects of the nation such as the historical stories, natural styles and features, cultural traditions, native conventions and the religious belief, etc. As a folk literature form, they carry a vivid color of a national culture and are beneficial to study a nation comprehensively such as the national history, folk-customs and language. In this chapter, the relationship between culture and language will be discussed in order to penetrate some insights into proverbs.

Language and culture are highly integrated with each other. It is generally acknowledged that language and culture are inseparable and mutually influenced so that one cannot understand or appreciate the one without knowledge of the other. Brown (1980: 124) describes the two like this: ?a language is a part of culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one can not separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture.?/P>

Language is a part of culture and plays a very important role in it. Some social scientists consider it the keystone of culture. Without language, they maintain, culture would not be possible. In the broadest sense, language is the symbolic representation of people and it comprises their historical and cultural backgrounds as well as their approaches to life and their ways of living and thinking. Therefore, language can help people express their understanding of the world and attitudes toward the world. Language can record the development of a nation and a society. People can learn culture left behind by their ancestors through the acquisition of language, so language becomes the embodiment of culture. Language is a part of culture, perhaps best defined as the

totality of beliefs and practices of a society. This makes language the distinctive feature of human society, something indispensable for the functioning of a culture and for handing it down to succeeding generations.

On the other hand, culture has an important influence on language. Language is influenced and shaped by culture. It is the carrier and a part of culture and reflects culture.

In short, language and culture are tightly interacted with each other in the sense that 1) culture includes language; language is a member of the family of culture; 2) that language is the carrier of culture, it records all the material and spiritual achievements of human beings in history.

Proverbs, as a part of language, are also a kind of social phenomenon and are closely integrated with the society and culture. They not only represent a kind of cultural phenomenon, but also record culture and its development. They cannot exist out of culture. Their coming into being, growth and death are more or less caused by cultural influences. Proverbs can provide interesting clues to a people's geography, history, social organization, social views and attitudes and they have great cultural values. For this reason, proverbs are culture-specific.

It is generally acknowledged that different peoples have great differences in their cultures. But since different peoples live on the same earth with roughly similar needs and some of them have even experienced similar social development stages, their experiences, emotional reflection and observation of the world are in many aspects similar. This shows that different peoples may have cultural generality besides cultural differences. Chinese and English peoples are with no exception. Their cultural differences and generality, on the other hand, unavoidably leave their traces in their languages.

Proverbs, as the cream of a language, inevitably carry the imprint of cultural differences and generality. The differences and generality respectively lead to the dissimilarities and similarities between Chinese and English proverbs and make a comparative study of the proverbs possible.

## Chapter Two

### A comparative study of Chinese and English proverbs

Chinese and English proverbs, carrying the imprint of the two peoples' cultural differences and generality, show some similarities and differences and this leads to their different relations of correspondence.

#### 2.1 Similarities

The similarities between English and Chinese proverbs mainly lie in their origin, some of their features and practical values.

##### 2.1.1 Similar origin

Broadly speaking, Chinese and English proverbs enjoy the similar origin. *Proverbs are the daughter of daily life; Proverbs are the children of experience.* They both originate from people's daily life and experience. They are the reflection of people's intellect, wisdom and experience. To be specific, they both come from folk life, mythology or fairy tales, literary works and religious records, etc.

###### 2.1.1.1 Originating from folk life

Proverbs are the summary of people's experience in their everyday life. The summarized

experience and reason are abstracted from the practice of people's life and work. They express people's simple and healthy thoughts, feelings and sentiments. More often than not, it reveals a universal truth from a particular point so as to enlighten people.

A large portion of proverbs was created by working people such as seamen on the sea, hunters in the wood, farmers in the fields, workmen at mills, housewives and cooks in the kitchen and so on, using familiar terms that were associated with their own trades and occupations. For example, *Hoist sail when the wind is fair* were first used by seamen; *If you run after two hares, you will catch neither* by hunters; *Don't have all your eggs in one basket* by farmers; *New broom sweeps clean* by housewives and *Too many cooks spoil the broth* by cooks, etc.<sup>7</sup> Such expressions were all colloquial and informal and once confined to a limited group of people engaged in the same trade or activity. But they proved terse, vivid, forcible and stimulating so later they broke out of their bounds and gradually gained wide acceptance. As a result, their early stylistic features faded in part and many have come to become part of the common core of language and are now used in different situations.

Some proverbs are concerned with some folk practice and customs. For example, *Good wine needs no bush*. This proverb is from an ancient popular English practice. In the past, English wine merchants tended to hang some ivy bushes or a picture of ivy bushes on their doors as a symbol of wine selling. In fact, it was a shop sign and functioned as a signboard. This in fact shows the past common practice that merchants of different trades would hang different particular things as signs for their goods. Similarly, Chinese people have their *挂羊头, 卖狗肉* to criticize those who say one thing but mean another.

Another example is concerned with people's wedding practice. English people believed that if the weather were fine and sunny on a girl's wedding day, the girl would most probably enjoy a happy marriage life. Otherwise, all sorts of misfortunes and adversities would befall on her. From this custom, English people have got a proverb *Happy is the bride that sun shines on*. Some Chinese proverbs are also from the customs concerned with marriage. For example, *强扭的瓜不甜, 包办的婚姻不美满*. This proverb originated from the common practice in ancient China. In the past, young girls didn't have the right to decide whom to marry. Their parents had the final say in their marriage. Usually, the parents would ask a matchmaker for help. The matchmaker went between two families and passed on the message. Finally, the girl's parents made the final decision whether the girl would marry the chosen boy or not. This is known as arranged marriage. Such a marriage, more often than not, would lead the couple to an unhappy life. Because they seldom or even never saw each other before, they knew even little about the other party's behavior or manners, let alone his/her personality or virtues. It was often beyond the couple's hopes to enjoy a happy marriage.

Some proverbs come from ancient people's deeply rooted beliefs such as their superstitious tendency and belief. In the past, English people held that if a person spoiled salt from the salt bottle, misfortune and bad luck would follow. Then the person in the question must sprinkle the spoiled salt from their left shoulders so as to drive off their ill luck. In turn, English people have got the proverb *Help me to salt and you help me to sorrow*. Chinese people have *左眼跳财, 右眼跳灾* to express the relation between biological reaction and ill luck.

Some proverbs come from people's distinction between sexes such as their discrimination against women. For example, *女大不中留, 留下结冤仇; 嫁出去的女儿泼出去的水*.<sup>8</sup> It comes from a deeply rooted traditional viewpoint. In the past, Chinese people held that a grown-up daughter should get married as soon as possible. Otherwise, something unexpected such as love affairs would happen and bring great shame to the whole family. And that once the girl got married, she would no longer belong to the original family any more. She had become a member of her husband's family once and for all. Whatever might happen to her during her marriage life, she must endure and her parents couldn't or should never help her out. This shows the confinement of the authority of the husband and the father on

women. This is in fact a phenomenon of female discrimination. In fact, many proverbs come from people 拊 sexist discrimination such as 三个女人一台戏 and 头发长, 见识短. The former shows that women are always talkative and like to tell tales. The latter indicates that women are inferior to men not only in social status, but also in reasoning ability. The corresponding English proverbs also share the same ideas such as *Three women and a goose make a market* and *Long hair and short wit*.

#### 2.1.1.2 Originating from literary works

Many English and Chinese proverbs come from some literal works.

Many English proverbs are from *The Fables of Aesop*. These proverbs are very concise, thought provoking and humorous, and they reflect the essence and the true meaning of life. It is very easy for people to understand them and to put them into practice. Many of them are passed down till today. For example, *Kill not the goose that lays golden eggs* and *A lion may come to be beholden to a mouse* are from *The Fables of Aesop*.

Shakespeare 拊 works are probably the most colorful literature origin of proverbs. Many English proverbs are from the works of Shakespeare. For example, *All is not gold that glitters*. This proverb is from the great works of Shakespeare *The merchants of Venice*. It tells us that those who have a good appearance are not necessarily profound or learned. So we should be careful not to be deceived by those who are superficially flashy but without substance. Another example, *Brevity is the soul of wit* is from Shakespeare 拊 masterpiece *Hamlet*. It implies that literal language should be concise and brief without any dilatoriness.

Bacon is a distinguished English philosopher and writer. He is noted for a style of thorough exposition and alternative maxims. Many sentences in Bacon 拊 works have become golden saying and prevail among people. For example, *Reading makes a full man* tells people that only by reading can a person become learned and profound. Another proverb *Knowledge is power* emphasizes the importance of knowledge and encourages people to study more and learn more.

Pope is another celebrated figure in English literature. He emphasizes education and knowledge very much. Some sentences from his works have been accepted by the readers and become deeply rooted among people. Take *A little learning is a dangerous thing*<sup>9</sup> for example. This didactic proverb is a sentence in Pope 拊 *An Essay on Criticism* and it reflects his ideas about knowledge and learning.

Many Chinese proverbs are from Chinese classics. For example, 孙悟空跳不出如来佛的手心; 关公面前耍大刀; 假作真时真亦假, 真作假时假亦真 and 没有打虎将, 过不得景阳岗 are respectively from the great works *The Pilgrimage to the West*, *The Three Kingdoms*, *A Dream of Red Mansions* and *The Marsh Rebellion*. The four works are the most popular classics in China and they are even worldwide famous. They are the representatives of Chinese classics. In fact, many episodes and characters in some literary works have been accepted by the common people and they, in turn, have turned these special materials into proverbs and so they can be passed down from generation to generation. We have many such kinds of proverbs that are based on other popular and famous literary works such as 半路上杀出一个程咬金; 有了张良, 不显韩信; 庆父不死, 鲁难未已.<sup>10</sup>

#### 2.1.1.3 From religious records or from mythology and fairy tales

Chinese culture is deeply impacted by Buddhism and many proverbs are from Buddhist records such as 佛法平等, 佛门难上; 解铃还需系铃人. *Bible* is essential for British and American cultures. It is said that their cultures are not integrated without Bible. It is safe to say that Bible influences every aspect of its disciples' life. Consequently, many sayings and sentences in *Bible* have been popularly accepted. They have been deeply rooted

among people and people frequently use them to cite a truth or express their ideas without paying any attention to their origins any more. These sayings are no longer only confined to religion and they have become proverbs, e.g. *The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak; An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.*

Each nationality has its own mythology and fairy tales. Chinese traditional culture and ancient Greek and Roman civilization respectively bequeath their nationalities many mythologies and allusions. The mythologies and allusions have been valued as precious legacy of mankind and have become one of the major sources of proverbs.

For example:

*Far from Jupiter, far from thunder.*

*From his foot, you may know Hercules.*

八仙过海，各显神通。

寿比南山，福如东海。

#### 2.1.1.4 Originating from a nation抐 historical events

A nation抐 proverbs originate in a specific historical context. So many proverbs are closely connected with or come from a nation抐 historical events.

For example, *To no man will we refuse justice* is such a proverb. During the early and medieval ages, English economy and production constantly advanced. With the increased population and prosperous trade, many new cities emerged. In the countryside, some free peasants and feudal lords appeared and they came to have some power. In 1225, they put forward *the Great Charter* that weakened the king抐 power to some extent. In the charter, the king promised, ?I>To no man will we *refuse justice*.?SUP>11

Some proverbs are from the feudal lords and peasants?anger and indignation towards the king. *Might is right* is such one. It shows the reality of the developing state of the capitalist system. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century, England began its territorial expansion and gained swift and great development in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Industrial Revolution starting in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the increased economic power in the 19<sup>th</sup> century led to an emergent need for overseas material and market. So England began its massive colonial expansion and had expanded its territory by 135 times by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It became the greatest empire of that period. *Might is right* just reflects the capitalists? philosophy and ideology, that is, to gain power by force.

Some Chinese proverbs are also from historical events or conditions such as *只许州官放火，不许百姓点灯；宁学桃园三结义，不学孙膑共庞涓；* and *姜太公钓鱼，愿者上钩*, etc.

#### 2.1.1.5 Originating from other languages

With the development of society, a language cannot avoid contacting with other languages. In the contact, the certain language surely absorbs some proverbs from others.

Greece is an ancient civilized country and many English proverbs originated from Greek. And now, many Greek proverbs have come into other languages and become very popular, e.g. *One swallow does not make a summer* and *Man is the measure of all things*.

Many English proverbs originated from Latin. Before the 5<sup>th</sup> century when the Romans had not immigrated into the Great Britain, the ancestors of Anglo-Saxons had begun their

trade and business in Rome. After the 5<sup>th</sup> century, Roman missionaries delivered Christianity into England. And from Chaucer's Ages (1340-1400), European Renaissance struck England. Due to the above reasons, the English language has absorbed a lot from Latin. Some Latin proverbs are transferred into English. From *Quem dei diligunt adolescens moritur*, English people have got *Whom the Gods love die young*; and from *In vino veritas*, they have got *In wine there is truth*. Some other proverbs that are from Latin are *Blind men can judge no colors*; *Do in Rome as the Romans do*; and *Every block will not make a Mercury*.

Still, many English proverbs come from French. In the battle of Hastings in 1066, the Normans, under the lead of William, defeated the British Army and William was crowned. The conquerors ruled England for a long period of time and this impacted the English language deeply. For example, many French sayings have been translated into English and become proverbs. From *Quand le renard se met a precher, garde aux poules* and *La moutarde après le diner*, English people have got *When the fox preaches, take care of your geese* and *After dinner, mustard*. Some other English proverbs that are from French are *Charity begins at home*; *Among the blind, the one-eyed man is king*; and *The best fish swims near the bottom*.

Chinese people, like English people, have also got some proverbs from other languages, including English. For example, *慣he grapes are sour? as the fox said when he could not reach them* and *Eye for eye, tooth for tooth* are literally translated into *狐狸吃不到葡萄就说葡萄酸* and *以眼还眼,以牙还牙*. The two versions have become deeply rooted among Chinese people and have become Chinese proverbs.

## 2.1.2 Similar characteristics

English and Chinese proverbs share some common features in several aspects: language, rhetorical devices and flexibility.

### 2.1.2.1 Similar lexical characteristics

Proverbs are a form of folk literature. They are created by common people and orally handed down from generation to generation.

Proverb diction tends to be neat and simple. They are usually simply and informally worded. The diction tends to be everyday expression, simple and short words and they are polished again and again. They express the most substantial contents with the least words. So the language tends to be colloquial, concise, condensed and compact. More often than not, a few words can summarize rich meaning and justify a truth convincingly. They set people thinking and so they can gain enlightenment and inspiration. As for this feature, a famous English scholar and preacher in the 17<sup>th</sup> century hit the mark with a single comment. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of his book *The History of the Worthies of English*, he points out that *撻 proverb is much matter decocted into few words*.<sup>12</sup> For example, *No pains, no gains*; *Easy come, easy go*; *谦招益, 满招损* and *人争气, 火争焰*. All the proverbs show this feature in their wording.

Wording is the foundation in both speech and writing. The Chinese proverb *一字值千金* tells the importance of wording. Proverbs are the crystal of a nation's wisdom and culture. After being refined and polished from generation to generation, they come to be very smooth and easy for people to cite and remember. With its condensed and exquisite diction, a proverb exposes its simple or profound connotation. For this, proverbs play an important role in human language and have been enriching language greatly. In the aspect of diction, Chinese and English proverbs have great similarity.

#### (1) Colloquialism



Proverbs come from daily life and are frequently used orally. They are handed down from generation to generation. So colloquialism is the first choice concerned with diction.

*A horse stumbles that has four legs.*

麻雀当家， 叭叭喳喳。

搵eg?in the first proverb and 摯奔覘 in the second are both colloquial expressions. 搵 tumbles?and 摯催丛 麝 are both onomatopoeia frequently used in colloquial language.

Because of the colloquial words, proverbs enjoy a rich flavor of life and can express profound implied meanings. They can be read smooth and fluent. Apart from this, they are pleasing to the ear. So both the reader and hearer may feel cordial before proverbs.

(2) The use of synonyms

In order to convey the semantic ideas accurately, to enrich the word changes and to avoid some unnecessary repetition, both Chinese and English people lay stress on the use of synonyms in the proverbs.

*It never rain but pours.*

*Hasty climbers have sudden falls.*

人心难测， 海水难量。

千锤成利器， 百炼变纯钢。

单丝不成线， 独木不成林。

The use of synonyms makes the diction of proverbs rich and full of changes. The underlined words in either of the two English proverbs are synonyms. The application of synonyms is much more common and it shows greater originality and craftsmanship in Chinese proverbs. 撓鉞 and 撓綉, 摯筵 and 撓梯, 摯 and 撓罈 in each pair of the Chinese proverbs are respectively one of the morphemes of the compounds of 撓笏綉, 摯噶梯 and 摯笏罈 that are composed of two morphemes. To separate the two synonymous morphemes and use both of them separately can achieve the effect of echoing the former with the latter. It can correlate the two parts of a proverb more tightly and make the semantic expression more exact and distinct.

(3) The use of antonyms

In the objective world, there exist many contradictory elements such as good and evil, beautiful and ugly, true and false, etc. The skillful use of antonyms in proverbs may contrast the two sides and make the meaning more striking.

*What soberness conceals drunkenness reveals*

*Grasp all, lose all.*

人无远虑， 必有近忧。

千金易得， 知音难觅。

In the first proverb, 撓oberness?is opposite to 搵runkenness? and 搵onceal?is to 搵reveal? The skillful use of these two pairs of antonyms make the meaning 搵 person may tell the truth when he is drunk.?more emphatic and distinctive. In the fourth proverb, the two

opposite phrases 搭椎脛 and 擊衙數 stress the difficulty in getting true friendship. These ordinary words produce extraordinary meanings when they are in contrast. The contrast makes the proverbs more convincible and stronger in artistic appeal.

#### (4) The use of numeral terms

The numerals in proverbs can either show the actual amount or unreliable figure.

*Kill two birds with one stone.*

*A cat has nine lives.*

一山不藏二虎。

三个臭皮匠，顶个诸葛亮。

In the first and third proverbs, the numbers are actual ones. The first proverb means to achieve two goals by concentrating on doing one thing. In the second, 推ine?is an unreliable number and is just used to show the vigorous vitality of a cat. The third one implies that two well-matched persons who mutually make no compromise can never live in peace in the same place. In the fourth, 擱 鱒 is not really an actual number. It is used to show that the more people we have, the more wit or wisdom we will get.

#### (5) The use of names of some famous persons or ordinary ones

Some Chinese and English proverbs take up a person's name, some of them are from real historical tales, allusions or from literary works; some are just common persons. More often than not, these names don't refer to a particular person. They refer to anyone in a general sense. For example, 说曹操, 曹操到; 三个臭皮匠, 顶个诸葛亮. In the above two proverbs, both 撓懿數 and 擣罍鴿狗 are historical characters. But as time passes by, either of them refers to the particular historical figure any more. 撓懿數 has become a symbol of devil and can be used to refer to any wicked person. 擣罍鴿狗 is a person with great wisdom and has come to mean any wise person. The same case happens to English proverbs. Take *All work no play makes Jack a dull boy* for example. In this proverb, 撓ack?refers to any child. Another two examples, *All shall be well, Jack shall have Jill* and *A good Jack makes a good Jill*. 撓ack?and 撓ill?are two common names in the western countries and they actually refer to any adult young man and any adult young woman.

#### (6) Repetition

Some Chinese and English proverbs may repeat the same words in diction.

*Never trouble troubles till trouble troubles you.*

*Diamond cut diamond.*

画龙画虎难画骨，知人知面不知心。

种瓜得瓜，种豆得豆。

To use the same word repeatedly can strengthen the speaking tone and deepen the readers' impression. In the first proverb, 撓rouble?is used four times as to give prominence to the implied meaning 撓ever ask for trouble.?Similarly, 擣爬 and 擣獠 in the second one are used to make 擣鴉爬 and 擣恢獠 more distinctive. At the same time, a kind of linguistic beauty is also achieved.

### 2.1.2.2 Similar rhetorical characteristics

Chinese and English proverbs share some similar sentence patterns. They are usually very short and simple in structure. Some of them are simple sentences such as *知识就是力量; Knowledge is power; 一个巴掌拍不响 and It takes two to tango*. Or they may be compact and condensed complex sentences such as *来得容易, 去得快.; Easy come, easy go; 活到老, 学到老 and Live and learn*. These sentences are very concise, condensed and give the prominence to the meaning and expressiveness. Apart from that, elliptical sentences and inverted ones are also frequently used. The concise and refined pattern of proverbs makes it much easier for people to cite or use them. Elapsed sentences are also often taken up, e.g. *无风不起浪; No smoke without fire; 不入虎穴, 焉得虎子 and Nothing venture, nothing have*.

Most proverbs are from the folk and are created by the working people. Because of their vivid and figurative language, they often impress people deeply and people may get great enjoyment from it. This effect is closely attributed to the rhetorical devices adopted in proverbs. The clever and ingenious use of rhetorical devices may strike the readers deeply. The creator's perfect command of the use of rhetorical devices makes them fresh, humorous, implicit and full of wit. Many Chinese and English proverbs take up the same rhetorical devices such as simile, metaphor, hyperbole and antithesis, etc.

Here are some examples: *大刀阔斧, 势如破竹; 众人像面镜; A bad custom is like a good cake, better broken than kept and A black plum is as sweet as a white*. In all the above proverbs, simile is used. Simile is a figure of speech in which two essentially dissimilar objects are expressly compared with one another by the use of *like* or *as*.<sup>13</sup>

While in the following two pairs, metaphor is applied. Metaphor is a figure of speech in which two unlike objects are implicitly compared without the use of *like* or *as*.<sup>14</sup>

*失败是成功之母; Failure is the mother of success.*

*时间就是金钱; Time is life.*

Hyperbole, which is an exaggeration used to give emphasis, is another rhetorical device that is frequently used both in English and Chinese proverbs, e.g. *好事不出门, 坏事传千里 and Every lover sees a thousand graces in the beloved object*.

Antithesis is also frequently used. It is to arrange some phrases or sentences that have nearly the same amount of words, the same structure and related meaning. Thus, two contrasted words or idea are balanced.<sup>15</sup> The parallel structure, distinctive rhythm and concise language may strike the readers deeply. For example:

*Out of sight, out of mind.*

*Man proposes, God disposes.*

*良药苦口利于病, 忠言逆耳利于行。*

*谦虚使人进步, 骄傲使人落后。*

Apart from the above-mentioned rhetorical devices, metonymy, personification and other devices are also often used.

### 2.1.2.3 The flexibility of proverbs

The flexibility of proverbs is manifested in three aspects: the existence of synonymous proverbs, structural flexibility and the creative use of proverbs.

Some proverbs, though different in some aspects, express the same idea. The two Chinese proverbs 宁愿站着死, 不愿跪着生 and 宁为玉碎, 不为瓦全 express the same meaning of sacrificing down one抁 life for a just cause? While 路遥知马力 and 疾风知劲草 almost show the same idea that 捏t takes time or some other cost to know the truth.?In this aspect, English proverbs are similar. We have many synonymous English proverbs such as *It is a small flock that has not a black sheep* and *There is a black sheep in every flock*.<sup>16</sup> This pair express the same idea of the common existence of evils. While another pair *Don抁 ask for the moon* and *Only fool ask for the moon* similarly suggest people not to do stupid things.

Though proverbs enjoy structural stability, comparatively speaking, the stability is not so strong and tends to be flexible sometimes. In other words, the structures of some proverbs are changeable and not so set. We may replace one component with a synonymous word while keep the same structure and meaning. As long as the proverb expresses the same idea, it doesn抁 matter. For example, we have a Chinese proverb 天下乌鸦一般黑. And we may change the word 撵谿糕 into 擀橡糕 and get 天下老鸱一般黑. The two express the same idea. Still, we may change 留得青山在, 不怕没柴烧 into 留得青山在, 不愁没柴烧 and the meaning doesn抁 change. English proverbs enjoy the same feature. For example, we may change *Light come, light go* into *Lightly come, lightly go* and *Lightly gained, quickly lost* into *Lightly won, lightly held*.

The creative use of proverbs is another aspect of the flexibility of proverbs. Such creativity has made language more expressive and thus fills it with great vitality. Sometimes, we may cut the proverbs short by just saying the first few words of a proverb. For example, when we express the idea of 搯o strike a proper balance between work and rest? we may choose the English proverb *All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy*. But we may not speak out the whole proverb and we can just say 拮|I work and no play...?/I> to convey what we mean and that doesn抁 affect the communication. As for Chinese proverbs, this point is most clearly illustrated in the proverbs that are composed of antithesis. Many Chinese proverbs are made of antithesis. In practice, the speaker may just cite one part of the proverb to express his idea. For example, for 江山易改, 本性难易, the speaker may just cite 江山易改 or 本性难易 to express his idea. And for 路遥知马力, 日久见人心, he can also cite either part of the proverb to convey the idea. Sometimes, in order to achieve a special language effect such as humor or satire, some parts of proverbs may be changed. For example, for a person who has taken up different careers and has grasped several skills, we may change the original Jack of all trades and master of none into ?I>Jack of all trades and master of several?<sup>17</sup> This is really an original approach and it conveys the intended idea more strikingly. Another example is about the Chinese proverb, 只许州官放火, 不许百姓点灯. Different people may have different creative use in different context. For example, a hen-pecked husband may complain his wife ?I>只许妻子放火, 不许丈夫点灯? A clerk who feels wronged may complain his domineering boss ?I>只许老板放火, 不许职员点灯?/P>

### 2.1.3 Similar practical functions

*A proverb has contents of gold; 泉水最清, 谚语最精.* Proverbs, closely related to people抁 life and containing people抁 intelligence, wisdom and experience of generations, have great practical values in their life. They are just like a compass that guides people抁 life so as to avoid detours.

#### 2.1.3.1 Allegorical function

Some proverbs are allegorical and aim to persuade and teach people. To persuade is to sing the praise of justice, to fight against the bully. To lecture is to guide people to adopt a correct attitude towards life, to take a proper way to get along well with the others. For example, *Better die with honor than live with shame* and 与其忍辱偷生, 不如光荣而死; *Don抁 have cloak to make when it begins to rain* and 未雨绸缪. Such allegorical proverbs sound very firm and resolute and they can strengthen people抁 conviction and awaken people抁 consciousness of life or better their thinking methods. They are very

helpful for people to make distinction between right and wrong, to be clear about what to love and what to hate. Because they are good to people 抁 self-cultivation and they can call for deep thought, many people take allegorical proverbs as their life or work maxims.

Some proverbs expose and criticize the dark side of the ages or society. They attack the vile practices of the society so as to remind people to keep conscious and maintain sharp vigilance. For example, *The fox changes his skin, but not his habit* and 狐皮可换, 狐性难改; *A leopard cannot change its spots* and 江山易改, 本性难易. People tend to recite such proverbs when they are revealing the evil in the society or when they are reminding others to keep alert.

### 2.1.3.2 Instructive function

Some proverbs reveal universal philosophic truth and they tell people the ways of life. For example, *Industry is the fortune 抁 right hand and frugality is the left*; 勤劳是财富的右手, 节俭是财富的左手; *Actions speak louder than words* and 事实胜于雄辩 are such proverbs. From them, people may get the principles to conduct themselves in society. Both the Chinese and English proverbs have a great number of such proverbs.

Many proverbs summarize knowledge of people 抁 daily life such as *The best wine comes out of an old vessel* and 陈缸出好酒; *Soft fire makes sweet malt* and 慢工出细活. As people 抁 daily life is complicated and extremely trifling and all embracing, such proverbs are numerous. They summarize people 抁 knowledge in their life and they tell people what to do and how to do it. They are just like an encyclopedia to guide people 抁 daily life. From them, people may broaden their knowledge and outlook so as to avoid detours. Some proverbs of this type are concerned with a particular field. For example, 伤筋动骨一百天和 少吃多餐, 病好自安 belong to the medical field; while 牛要放, 猪要胀 is concerned with animal husbandry.

Some proverbs reflect and sum up the natural features of a place and have strong local color. They act as a shortcut for people to learn the local conditions, products and customs and also as a guide for the tourists.

For example, *England is the ringing island; Blessed is the eye, that is betwixt Severn and Wye* and *Oxford for learning, London for wit, Hull for women and York for horses*.<sup>18</sup> All the above three proverbs reveal some local features of the U.K. There are many bells in England, and one can hear the bells ringing everywhere in this country. And the landscape between Severn and Wye is very nice. In the third one, we have four geographical names: Oxford, London, Hull and York. Oxford is a famous university town. London is the capital and the political, economic and cultural center of the Great Britain. Hull is famous for beauties and York for its horses. With the help of these proverbs, even those who have never been to these places can have a general idea about them.

With a vast territory, China has many historic sites and beautiful landscapes and they have enjoyed a good reputation. Different places have different natural conditions, products and customs. This can be reflected in some correlative Chinese proverbs. Some are about the local products of a local place. For example, 苏州不断菜, 杭州不断笋. This proverb tells us that Suzhou abounds in vegetables while Hangzhou abounds in bamboo shoots. Some proverbs are about the local geographical conditions, e.g. 天无三日晴, 地无三里平. It reveals the geographical conditions in Guizhou Province. That is, there are many mountains and it rains a lot there. Another proverb 上有天堂, 下有苏杭 tells people about the lovely scenery in Suzhou and Hangzhou. Still, some other proverbs are about the local customs of a place, e.g. 南人吃米, 北人吃面. It reveals the northerners and the southerners respectively have wheat and rice as their staple food. Another proverb 南甜北咸, 东辣西酸, on the other hand, exposes their different dietetic customs and habits.

Still, we have farmer 搯 proverbs and meteorological proverbs. Peasants of different ages, in their over years?work, practise and verify the farming experience and productive rules. From generation to generation, they sum up their experience and the farming rules into some vivid, concise and lively sentences. These sentences are farmer 搯 proverbs and they are practised and testified year after year and they have proved true and accurate. They reflect the peasants?farming experience and agricultural law and show the working people 搯 wisdom. Farmer 搯 proverbs are a precious and valuable part of agricultural data. Peasants of different ages have some of them as guide in their farming. And meteorological proverbs, which summarize the fundamental meteorological knowledge of generations, are also a big help in people 搯 life.

## 2.2 Differences between Chinese and English proverbs

Since culture is very important in affecting the characteristics of a language, the dissimilarities between Chinese and English proverbs are naturally very apparent. Generally speaking, the major differences lie in the number, images and meanings, and cultural tint.

### 2.2.1 Different Numbers

Compared with English proverbs, Chinese proverbs show one certain distinctive feature. That is, its immense number. Chinese people seem to have a proverb or saying for almost all conceivable situations- whether they be human-nature situations, or human-human relations. English proverbs, though also cover a wide range, are not so many as Chinese proverbs. More than twenty years ago, some people had made an estimate that Chinese proverbs amount to more than four million ones. *Chinese Proverb Data*(《中国谚语资料》), which are made up of three volumes, contains more than 45,000 proverbs.<sup>19</sup> While most English proverb dictionaries, include no more than half of the number. <sup>8</sup>

In some certain aspects, Chinese enjoys a much larger number of proverbs for some special reasons. For example, China, with a history of more than 5,000 years, has gone through different social stages and different social systems. For most of the time during the long feudal history, common Chinese were exploited and depressed by the upper class. So Chinese people enjoy a larger number of proverbs that reflect social inequalities and the feelings of the deprived and oppressed, such as 卖花姑娘插竹叶, 卖线姑娘裙脚裂; 只许州官放火, 不许百姓点灯; 民不与官斗 and 富家一顿饭, 穷家一年粮.<sup>20</sup> English proverbs, though quite some of them also reveal class exploitation such as *Might is right*, don 挟 have so many as Chinese proverbs in this aspect.

Chinese people believe in social harmony and brotherhood. They cherish mutual help and doing good for others. And they regard this as one of the most important virtues. Correspondingly, Chinese seem to have more such proverbs. For example, 前人栽树, 后人乘凉; 一人掘井, 众人吃水; 一个篱笆三个桩, 一个好汉三个帮. The British, who believe in individualism, don 挟 have so many such proverbs.<sup>20</sup>

Chinese proverbs contain more farmers?and meteorological proverbs than English ones. Farming proverbs constitute nearly 1/3 of Chinese proverbs and they are rich and wide ranging. Chinese people have proverbs in almost every link of the farming chain such as soil, fertilizer application, seed, irrigation, sowing, crop protection and harvest, field management, fruiting and picking, storing and preserving. While in England, farmers?proverbs are not 搯 so many and cannot be categorized so exquisitely.

### 2.2.2 Different images and meanings

English and Chinese belong to two different language families and they have formed their distinctive features in their respective particular cultural background. This can be seen in the ways of reasoning things out respectively taken by English and Chinese proverbs.

Both Chinese and English proverbs tend to take up images to reason things out. But there are some differences in image and meaning. The differences may be classified into three types: similar images for different meanings; different images for similar meanings and image blank.

### 2.2.2.1 Similar images for different meanings

Sometimes, a Chinese proverb may have a similar image as an English one. But because of cultural differences, the similar images may bring about completely different associations in the minds of the two peoples and so the meanings of the two proverbs are also different. For example, the image in the English proverb *Barking dogs seldom bite* is very similar to the one in the Chinese one 咬人的狗不露齿. But the similar images 搆狗 and 搆窟 can bring about completely different associations. More often than not, the English sentences that contain the word 搆狗 are commendatory while those Chinese ones with 搆窟 carry derogatory senses. The former proverb means that 搆狗 those who make threats just make a deceptive show of power and seldom take any action while the latter one reveals that those who intend to harm others often remain under cover. So 搆窟 in the Chinese proverb refers to those who are sinister and diabolic.

*A miss is as good as a mile* is very similar as the one in the Chinese proverb 失之毫厘, 谬以千里. In spite of the similar images 搆miss and 搆, the meanings of the two are quite different because of the different thinking modes of English and Chinese peoples. The English one means that 搆 the smallest failure, etc., is the same in effect as a large one. (*Longman Dictionary of English Idioms*, 1980) and 搆 missing by a margin is as convulsive as missing by a wide one. (*Webster's New World Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1970). From the explanation, we may conclude the English proverb means, 搆 mistake, whether it is small or large, is still a mistake in essence. While the Chinese one means that 搆 small error may lead to a more serious blunder.<sup>21</sup>

### 2.2.2.2 Different images for similar meanings

A proverb, though carrying different images, may have the same meaning as its counterpart in the other language.

*You can lead a horse to the water but you cannot make him drink;* 牛不喝水不能强按头.

*Kill not the goose that lays golden eggs;* 勿杀鸡取卵.

The two proverbs in the first pair have different images: one is 搆horse and the other is 搆牛. However, they have the same meaning, that is, 搆 you cannot force one to do anything that he is unwilling to do. As for the second pair, they both warn people not to be avaricious though they have two different images 搆goose and 搆鸡.

The English proverb *Every cook praises his own broth.* and the Chinese one 王婆卖瓜, 自卖自夸 have the same meaning: One tends to regard what one has as something significant. But the English proverb has 搆cook and 搆broth as its images while the Chinese one has 搆脚 and 搆蝶. Another two synonymous proverbs *Faith moves mountains* and 精诚所至, 金石为开 also have distinctively different images 搆mountains and 搆鹗, but their meanings are very similar: Absolute sincerity can conquer all.

### 2.2.2.3 Image blank

The synonymous Chinese and English proverbs don't necessarily both take up images. Sometimes the English one has an image while the synonymous Chinese one is in a simple and direct way. For example, *As well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb* has the same meaning as the Chinese one 一不做二不休. But the two are different in the way of reasoning

things out. The former is a figure of speech and it has two images: 擄heep?and 撿amb? while the latter tells in a simple and straightforward way without any images. Similarly, a Chinese proverb may have an image but its synonymous English one doesn't. For example, 金无足赤,人无完人 and *Every man has his weak side*; 不入虎穴,焉得虎子 and *Nothing venture, nothing gain*.

### 2.2.3 Different cultural tint

English and Chinese proverbs, originating in different cultural contexts, carry some distinctively different cultural tints.

#### 2.2.3.1 Reflecting different geographical features

English and Chinese proverbs, originating in particular geographical regions and under specific geographical contexts, respectively reflect different geographical conditions of the two nations?

*When the sun sets bright and clear, an easterly wind you need not fear.* 万事俱备,只欠东风. From these two proverbs, we may see that English and Chinese people hold different attitudes towards the eastern wind. Taken the location of England as the reference mark, the west wind is from the ocean and it is very mild and humid. In Greek myth, the God of west wind is Zephyr, who is believed to live in a cave on Thrace. He abducted the Goddess Chloris and gave her dominion over flowers. In Roman myth, the God of west wind is Favonius, the protector of flowers and plants. Whether in Greek or Roman myths, what comes with the God of the west wind is the blossom of flowers and mild weather. While the east wind is from the north of European continent, so freezing and dry weather always comes with it. People have a good reason to prefer the west wind to the east one in their proverbs such as *When the wind is in the west, the weather is at the best; When the wind is in the east, it is good for neither man nor beast*. That is just opposite to the west wind in China. To China, the east wind from the Pacific Ocean brings moist and temperate air along with it. In Chinese myth, 东君 is the God of spring or spring breeze who brings warmth into the air. While the west wind from the dry and freezing inland comes along with cold and dry weather. No wonder Chinese people sing highly of the eastern wind while depreciate the west wind such as 立夏起东风, 田禾收割丰; 东风换喜雨, 老娘接闺女; 傍晚吹西风晚上有霜冻. <sup>22</sup>

#### 2.2.3.2 Reflecting different customs and living ways

Francis Bacon once said that a nation's wisdom and spirit could be both found in proverbs. English and Chinese proverbs are created in English and Chinese people's life and work and they reflect their different living ways and customs.

*He that has been shipwrecked shudders at still water; It is too late to cast anchor when the ship is on the rocks; A little leak will sink a great ship.* All these proverbs are about sailing. England, an island country, is located in the western seaside of Europe. This special geographical location determines their particular way of life and climate. They live by seaside and their life cannot do without sailing and fishing. And in fact, navigation and fishing have been and are very important to people in this insular country. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century, England began its massive colonial expansion and its adventures on the sea. Their huge ships had been sailing the seas for hundreds of years and had established a rich empire by means of overseas expansion and exploitation. Sea fights between Spanish and English ships were frequent, and astonishingly, the English were the more aggressive and the more successful. Their victory over the great Spanish fleet, the Armada, marked the beginning of an English naval tradition that has never been forgotten. Their proverbs are correspondingly concerned with voyage, fishing and their braving against thunders and storms.

Many Chinese proverbs such as 农夫不耕田, 城里断炊烟; 农民不使劲, 饿死世间人 and 不耕不种, 终身落



空show the importance of agriculture in people's life. Though some Chinese live by the seaside, most of the population lives in the inland area and 80% of them are agricultural population. So agriculture is the fundamental and crucial trade. Chinese people have many other proverbs about the fatal role of agriculture such as *农为百计之本, 田为农民之根; 三百六十行, 庄稼是上行*. Chinese farming proverbs show the rich experience peasants have got in their farming and they objectively show the farming and agricultural laws. These laws have become fixed and been accepted by the common people. China, with a vast territory, has various terrains and different climate types. According to the different topographical and climate conditions, farmers take up various agricultural activities and plant different crops. From agriculture, livestock raising, grazing to poultry raising, Chinese people have different types of farming proverbs. And each type can be categorized more exquisitely. Farming proverbs constitute a large part of Chinese proverbs and they are categorized in detail.

English people tend to keep dogs as their pets. In their eyes, dogs are human's companions and close friends. And they are a symbol of good qualities. To them, dogs are faithful, reliable, brave and smart. Many proverbs are concerned with the images of dogs but they show human's life and behaviors. For example, *Love me, love my dog; Every dog has its day*. Even if dog is not used as an appreciatory word, it tends to be neutral. For example, *The dog bites the stone, not him that throw it*. Only in rare cases, dogs are taken as depreciatory.

Like English people, Chinese people also like to keep dogs. So many Chinese proverbs are also about dogs such as *狗嘴里吐不出象牙; 狗走千里吃屎, 狼走千里吃人; 狗仗人势, 雪仗风势; 狗眼看人底*. From these proverbs, we may see that Chinese people have greatly different views towards dogs. Unlike English people, Chinese people's purposes of keeping dogs are quite different from that of English people. In China, especially in the countryside, dogs are kept mainly for the sake of guarding door entrance. Chinese people tend to disgust and despise dogs psychologically. The images of dogs often remind them of a bad person or something bad. So they usually tend to curse a person they hate or dislike as a dog. And the one who is cursed always regards it a big shame and insult. He will fly into rage and can never forget the insult.

### 2.2.3.3 Reflecting different religious faith

Many English proverbs originate from *Bible* and they reflect English people's religious faith such as *Man proposes, God disposes; Money can move even the gods; He that sups with the devil must have a long spoon; Young saints, old devils; Satan always finds work for idle hands to do; Satan reproves sin*. Many images in these proverbs are about God and devils. English people believe in Christianity and it is by far the most influential religion in the west. Every phase of man's life is touched by this religion, so much so that it has become part and parcel of western culture. And *the Bible*, which includes *the Old Testament* and *the New Testament*, is revered as the scriptures. Almost every family has a version of *Bible* and so it has come to be one of the major sources of English culture. Many English proverbs show the doctrines of their religion. For example, ? I>Chastity covers a multitude of sins.? 摘on挾 cast your pearls before swine.? 摠ide not your light under a bushel.? The first proverb is in fact an admonishment to tell people to show kindness towards each other because only love and kindness can eliminate sins. The second one advises people not to offer precious and valuable things to those who don't know their true values.

Many Chinese people believe in Buddhism and it is by far the most popular religion in China. Many proverbs are about Buddhism such as *丈二和尚摸不着头脑; 做一天和尚撞一天钟; 跑了和尚跑不了庙; 苦海无边, 回头是岸* and *放下屠刀, 立地成佛*. These proverbs are made up of many Buddhist terminologies such as *和尚, 庙, 苦海* and *佛*. Buddhism was introduced into China more than 2,000 years ago and has become some people's spiritual prop. To the worshippers, it is supposed to save mankind from the sea of misery of life. In Buddhism, Buddhist is regarded as the holiest and the most sacred saint. The doctrines admonish people to do

good deeds and so they can go to the heaven to relieve souls from purgatory. Buddhism encourages people to strive for virtue and cultivate their moral character. People must behave themselves by self-examination.

Some other proverbs are about Taoism such as 一人得道, 鸡犬升天; 八仙过海, 各显神通; 道高一尺, 魔高一丈, etc. All these proverbs reflect Taoism that comes next to Buddhism in China.

#### 2.2.3.4 Reflecting different philosophical values

English and Chinese proverbs reflect different philosophical values in the following aspects: individualism vs. collective; different attitudes toward changing; different tendency towards time perception and different senses of families and marriage.

### Individualism vs. collective

Many English proverbs show American people 扌 advocating of freedom and individualism, e.g. *What is yours is mine, and what is mine is my own* and *Every man for himself and God for us all*. In the west, people draw a hard and fast line between subjectivity and objectivity, between spirit and material. Independence and privacy play an important role in their life. They hold that people should lead a life of pleasure and 搯he pursuit of happiness?is an innate right. So many people are preoccupied with pleasure seeking. The proverb *Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die* is an actual example of this. They stress independence and believe in individualism. In their eyes, individual rights and interests rank first. The proverb *Self-preservation is the first law of nature* is one of the examples. Though there is an English proverb *Make yourself necessary to someone*, this is not the mainstream in individualism tendency.

Under the effect of individualism, people value self-reliance and independence, e.g. *Self-help is the best help; God helps those who help themselves* and *Help yourself and heaven will help you*. Self-reliance impels people to create opportunities, seek competition and be ready for risks. And they are never content. Many proverbs illustrate this. For example, *Discontent is the first step in progress* and *Where there is life, there is hope*. In the heated competition, people try constantly no matter they succeed or fail. They are eager to gain whatever they can. Many proverbs reflect this point, e.g. *If at first you don't 挟 succeed, try, try, try again; Forbidden fruit is the sweetest* and *Catch as catch can*.

The individual role can be illustrated by the examples as follows:

*He helps little that helps not himself.*

*God helps those who help themselves.*

*When everyone takes care of himself, care is taken of all.*

*Self-preservation is the first law of nature.* 23

Other proverbs attach importance to independence and self-reliance.

*Every man is the architect of his own fortune.*

*If thou thyself canst do it, attend no other 扌 help or hand.*

*If you want a thing well done, do it yourself.*

*He who depends on another dines ill and sups worse.*

Some proverbs give prominence to the individualism.

*It is the squeaky wheel that gets the oil.*

And still some lay stress on individual differences.

*Tastes differ.*

*Every man after his fashion.*<sup>23</sup>

On the contrary, Chinese people pay much attention to collectivism and tend to hold a negative attitude to those who give prominence to an individual. Traditionally, Chinese people are conscious of groups or collective. They think highly of the role of groups or a collective and they think mutual help and mutual reliance seriously. Chinese people cherish the harmony among people and they tend to save the other side 担 面. Though in recent years, Chinese traditional value concept has been greatly impacted with the input of ideology, to give prominence to collective interests is still the main trend in China. Many Chinese proverbs give expression to this trend.

Some proverbs show the strength of collective or union, e.g. 众人拾柴火焰高 and 众木成林, etc. Some reflect the importance of mutual help and mutual reliance such as 一个篱笆三个桩, 一个好汉三个帮; 在家靠父母, 出门靠朋友. Some lay stress on the harmonious relationship among people and suggest that people should be modestly declined and take the feelings of others into consideration, e.g. 相互协助事好办, 各揣私心事难成 and 忍一时风平浪静, 退一步海阔天空. Still, some proverbs, from the opposite side, stress the importance and rule of collectivism and union. For example, 枪打出头鸟 and 两虎相争, 必有一伤.<sup>23</sup>

## Different attitudes towards changing

Western culture is commerce-guided. While doing business, people are required to adjust to everything in order to adapt to the living and competition needs. So the essence of western culture is changing and the core is that *Everything is changing* and that *The change is constant*. To Americans, change embodies a spirit of breaking from the conventions and bringing forth new ideas so as to make innovations. American history is one that is full of changes. Now, American society is changing much more quickly and along with the changes come more opportunities, more money and a more comfortable life. To Americans, changes bring forth new ideas and innovations. And they, in turn, offer people more opportunities and more wishes. Some English proverbs reflect this point, e.g. *New things are fair; Everything new is fine; Newer is truer; Changing is inevitable* and *There is nothing permanent except change*. American people sing highly of changes in their proverbs, e.g. *Change brings life* and *Variety is the spice of life*.

Chinese people, on the contrary, traditionally value stability and steadiness. Chinese traditional philosophers held that all things on earth were essentially constant and that all things remain essentially the same despite all apparent changes. Consequently, this point cast shadow over people 担 心. 撙 节 and stability? are a matter of prime importance. And people are pursuing development with steady steps. They strive for steadiness in many aspects, from the individuals, the families to the whole society and country. And they are adjusted to living in stability. Once the stability is broken, many people will be at a loss. Very few Chinese proverbs sing highly of changes. On the contrary, we have 树倒猢猻散 and 飞鸟各投林. They reflect people 担 maladjustment to unexpected changes.

## Different tendency towards time perception

Renaissance set the westerners free from the binding up of religious authority. And the

opening up of the voyage route impelled them to know and understand the world and universe anew. With the expansion of commercial capital, the westerners, especially Americans, tend to have their eyes on the future, not on the far or ideal future, but on the near future that can be realized soon.

Due to this tendency, some westerners seldom look back upon things that have passed by. In their eyes, old ages and experience do not necessarily deserve their respect. On the contrary, old ages may bring about some negative or unpleasant associations. This can be reflected in some proverbs.

*The properer man, the worse luck.*

*Experience is the mistress of fools.*

*Experience keeps a dear school, but fools learn in no other.*

The above proverbs indicate that westerners don't think highly of experience or qualifications.

Some proverbs reflect westerners' standpoint on old ages.

*There is no fool like an old fool.*

*Old age is sickness of itself.*

*Old age is a hospital that takes in all disease.*

*The cure for old age is grave.*

Due to their time perception, Americans hold that they should get prepared in advance and do things at their earliest convenience. Some correlative proverbs to this point are *This world is unstable, so saith the sage, therefore gather in time, ere thou fall into age* and *The early bird catches the worm*.

Concerned with time perception, Chinese people are different from American people and they tend to have their eyes on the past. That is to say, the past is much valued in Chinese culture. To some degree, this is due to the connected Chinese civilization that can be traced to the same origin. Chinese people, with a long history of 5,000 years, have rich experience. And people tend to look back to draw on the experience of the past. This time perception has been all along influencing people's behavior and mode of thinking. No matter what they want to do, they will think about whether they have done it or how they have done it. Moreover, they take the past as the measures to weigh up the gains and losses. Therefore, they have great respect for the old and the teachers. And they value experience, ages and qualifications that are correlated with the past. Many Chinese proverbs suggest this. The two proverbs *吃一堑,长一智* and *前车之覆,后车之鉴* suggest people to draw lesson from the past. From *树老根多,人老识多* and *姜老辣味大,人老经验多*, we may see Chinese people's respect for the old. And *经得多来见得广* stresses the value of experience.

Of course, we cannot deny the fact that there are exceptions that are opposite to the main stream. For example, *一个和尚挑水吃,两个和尚抬水吃,三个和尚没水吃* is contrary to Chinese collective tendency. *流水不腐,户枢不蠹* attaches importance to changing. While *青出于蓝而胜于蓝* indicates that the old or the teachers cannot necessarily be better than the young.

Similarly, we can see exceptions in English proverbs. Some proverbs also reflect the strength of collectivism and the benefits of mutual-help, e.g. *Many hands make light work*.

Though westerners appreciate and pursue changes, they have some proverbs that show the disadvantages of changing, e.g. *A tree often transplanted, bears not much fruit* and *Three removals are as bad as a fire*. And though westerners keep an eye on the future, they also lay stress on the importance of experience and the value of old ages. For example, *Years know more than books*. And *Experience is the mother of wisdom*.

## Different senses of families and marriage

Chinese people have a strong sense of family as is reflected in the proverbs such as *金窝银窝, 不如自家草窝* and *子不嫌母丑, 狗不嫌家贫*. Each person has a close tie with his family and cherishes it very much. Comparatively speaking, the American family tie is much looser. Though they have a similar proverb *East, west, home is best* to express their love for their families, in their eyes, *Home is where the heart is*.

As for marriage, Americans hold that love is a prerequisite to it. Love comes first, and then marriage. *All is fair in love and war* and *Love is the reward of love*. These proverbs express their understanding of love. Chinese, on the other hand, are much more implicit and conservative towards love. Chinese people have very few proverbs that are about love. *金瓜配银瓜, 西葫芦配南瓜* is the traditional matching standard. Once a woman gets married, she will stick to the conventions that *嫁鸡随鸡, 嫁狗随狗* and *生是夫家人, 死是夫家鬼*. Though the traditional dress has been rejected and now many people give priority to love, Chinese people are still comparatively more conservative and reserved towards love and marriage.

### 2.3 Correspondence between Chinese and English proverbs

Based on the standard of syntax, image and implied meanings, the correspondence between Chinese and English proverbs falls into three types: correspondent proverbs, approximately correspondent proverbs and non-correspondent proverbs. Among these three standards, the degree of the similarities between implied meanings come first. If the meanings of two proverbs are completely different, no matter how similar their syntax and images are, we cannot take them as correspondent or approximately correspondent proverbs.

#### 2.3.1 Correspondent proverbs

Proverbs come into being in social practice. Since English and Chinese people have much in common in terms of social practice, the proverbs that record the practice tend to show some generality.

Though there exist some differences between English and Chinese, we have quite some corresponding proverbs. They are completely the same just like word-for-word translation. These proverbs are very easy to be accepted by the counterpart readers.

*Strike the iron while it is hot.* 趁热打铁。

*Like father, like son.* 有其父必有其子。

*As distance tests a horse抐 strength, so time reveals a person抐 heart.* 路遥知马力, 日久见人心。

All the above English proverbs are completely corresponding to their Chinese counterparts either in meaning, syntax or images.

Many borrowed proverbs from another language remain unchanged after they are translated into another language. This is another cause of corresponding proverbs. For example, from the Bible, Chinese people got the proverb *An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*. And it is translated into Chinese just word by word. Hence, we have a corresponding Chinese

proverb 以眼还眼, 以牙还牙. Similarly, English people got 千里之行, 始于足下 from Laozi and the translated version *A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step* has become the corresponding proverb to the original Chinese one. From 临渊羡鱼, 不如退而结网, English people have got *You'd better return home and make a net than go down to the river and desire to get fishes.* <sup>24</sup>

Here are some corresponding proverbs:

*All roads lead to Rome.* 条条大路通罗马。

*Knowledge is power.* 知识就是力量。

*Time is money.* 时间就是金钱。

## 2.3.2 Approximately correspondent proverbs

Comparatively speaking, correspondent proverbs account for only a small part in all proverbs. Many English and Chinese proverbs are only approximately correspondent to each other. In many cases, the approximately correspondent proverbs express the same implied meaning, but are different either in sentence patterns or images. In another word, they are partially overlapped. Though this type of proverbs is not so coincident as correspondent proverbs, they will remind us of the approximately correspondent proverbs in the counterpart language. Due to their similarities, this type of proverbs is not so difficult to understand or grasp. And this type account for quite a large number in all proverbs.

Approximately correspondent proverbs take up different images or syntax to imply the same meaning. For example, *See Naples and die* and 不到黄河心不死 have the same meaning though they are different in sentence patterns and images. They both mean 不要停止 until one reaches one's goal? But they take up different images. Naples is a typical image to westerners while Huanghe to Chinese. As for the sentence pattern, the English proverb is an imperative sentence, while the Chinese one is a declarative sentence.

Some more examples: *An empty wagon makes most noise.* 半瓶水响叮当。

*Rome was not built in one day.* 冰冻长江, 非一日之寒。

Both the proverbs in the first pair mean that 一个 person with a smattering of knowledge is eager to show off? The two sentence patterns are the same, too. But the English one has 一个 empty wagon? as the image, while the Chinese one has 傻愣愣.

As for the second pair, they both mean that 一个人 cannot be overanxious for quick results or success? and they are both declarative sentences. But the English proverb takes up the allusion of building up of Rome to reason the meaning out, while the Chinese one has the typical Chinese Yangtze River as its image.

Because of the existence of synonymous proverbs, sometimes one proverb may have more than one approximately correspondent proverb. For example, the Chinese proverb 一朝被蛇咬, 十年怕井绳 is approximately corresponding to *He that hath been bitten by a serpent is afraid of a rope; A burnt child dreads the fire and A scalded dog thinks cold water hot.* While the English proverb *Among the blind the one-eyed man is king* is approximately corresponding to 山中无老虎, 猴子称大王; 蜀中无大将, 廖化当先锋 and 矮子里面挑长子. <sup>25</sup>

Some other examples of this type are:

*You can take a horse to water, but you can not make him drink.* 老牛不喝水, 不能强按

头。

*Kill not the goose that lays golden eggs.* 莫杀鸡取卵。

*Nothing venture, nothing have.* 不入虎穴，焉得虎子。

*All lay loads on a willing horse.* 鞭打快牛。

### 2.3.3 Non-correspondent proverbs

It is impossible for all English and Chinese proverbs to be correspondent or approximately correspondent. The differences between the two are absolute and inevitable, while their likeness or similarity is relative and accidental. Especially for those proverbs with distinctive cultural tint, they have been established and accepted in their long-term usage and carry integrated and distinctive meanings. It is very hard to find out their approximately correspondent proverbs, let alone their correspondent ones. In fact, more often than not, two seemingly correspondent or approximately correspondent proverbs are totally unrelated. For example, we have an English proverb *Claw me and I will claw thee*. Some Chinese people take it as the correspondent proverb to 以眼还眼, 以牙还牙 because they think its literal meaning is 捏f you scratch me, I will scratch you? But in fact, to 插law?here means to 擄troke slightly and gently? So the implied meaning of the English proverb is 捏f you praise me, I will also sing highly of you? That is just opposite to 以眼还眼, 以牙还牙in meaning as the Chinese one means to 搯fend against the opposite by his/her means?

Another example is concerned with *One cannot make a silk purse out of a sow*擄 ear. At first sight, people may regard it as the approximately correspondent proverb to 巧妇难为无米之炊. But this is far from right. The English proverb means that 搯ne cannot make something good of what is by nature bad or inferior in quality?because here 擄ow擄 ear? refers to bad or inferior material while 擄silk purse?is something good or valuable. The Chinese proverb 巧妇难为无米之炊means 搯ne cannot make anything without the necessary materials.?To some degree, that is just similar to *You cannot make bricks without straw*.

Still, another typical example is *Lock the stable door after the horse is stolen*. The proverb might naturally remind Chinese people of 亡羊补牢, 为时不晚. These two proverbs are seemingly very similar to each other. But in fact, the English one means 捏t is useless to take precautions after something has happened that could have been foreseen and guarded against.?While the literal meaning of the Chinese one is 捏t is not too late to mend the fold even after some of the sheep have been lost?and its implied meaning is that 捏t is never too late to make up after suffering from some kind of loss? Despite the outward similarity, they are just completely opposite to each other.

Another typical English proverb is *Fine feathers make fine birds*. Many Chinese regard it as the corresponding one to 佛要金装, 人要衣装. But it is not. The English proverb is from *The Fables of Aesop*. The original sentence is 搯fine feathers don袂 make fine birds? The adapted positive proverb is in a sarcastic tone: An impressive or showy appearance is nothing but beauty that is only skin deep. It is very obvious that it carries a derogatory sense. The Chinese one, on the other hand, is commendatory: When well and neatly dressed, one is good looking. The English one stresses the importance of inner beauty, while the Chinese one is inclined to remind people to beautify their outward appearance.

Here are some pairs of non-correspondent proverbs.

*Better bend than break.* 宁愿站着死，不愿跪着生。

*Better lose the saddle than the horse.* 塞翁失马，焉知非福。

*A closed mouth catches no flies.* 病从口入。

*History repeats itself.* 历史是不会重演的。

## Chapter Three

### Translation principles and approaches

#### 3.1 Rationale for various translation approaches

The translation approaches the author is going to put forward are based on the relevance theory. Relevance is a relation between an assumption and a context. An assumption is relevant in a context if and only if it has some contextual effect in that context.<sup>26</sup> Relevance can be classified into four types: maximally relevant, very relevant, weakly relevant and irrelevant. The degree of relevance can be assessed in two aspects: contextual effect and processing effort. Other things being equal, an assumption with greater contextual effects is more relevant; and other things being equal, an assumption requiring a smaller processing effort is more relevant. In another word, an assumption is relevant in a context to the extent that its contextual effects in this context are large; an assumption is relevant in a context to the extent that the effort required to process it in this context is small.<sup>26</sup>

Under the relevance theory, communication is an ostensive-inferential process. It is a cognitive activity based on some certain inferential rules. Whether the communication is achieved or not depends on the communicators' manifestness toward the cognitive context and their mutual manifestness.<sup>26</sup> Sperber and Wilson hold that the cognitive process always follow a principle of relevance: communicators infer discourse according to the relevant information. The new information is supposed to be relevant to the old information that has been acquired by the audience. A new discourse, in a certain way, must be relevant to the existing knowledge in the audience's mind. The speaker must abide by the relevance theory and make the discourse relevant to the context; the audience, guided by the theory, should infer the correlative discourse to achieve the communication.

Though the relevance theory is not directly correlated with translation, it can interpret and guide translation. Thanks to the relevance theory, now the researchers have enough reasons to study the translating process, not only the translated version itself. According to the relevance theory, translation is an act of ostensive-inferential intralingual or interlingual interpretation of a source text.<sup>27</sup> During a communication, the speaker's intention and the audience's expectation play an important role. The speaker is expected to offer enough relevant information and thus the audience can infer the speaker's intention more easily. The translator is a reader and a speaker (or writer) as well. His dual role as a reader or speaker leads to his dual mission. First, he should understand and cognize the original text as to achieve the maximal relevance. After this step, he must transfer the original text from one language into another and transfer the maximal relevance to the readers. That is to say, in the process of translation, he should guarantee the optimal relevance of the inference, and as for the translated version, he must assure it is the optimum reappearing of the original.

It isn't an easy task for translators, especially not for those who translate from Chinese into English or vice versa. According to the Halls, Chinese and English belong to different categories of culture in terms of perception and communication. Chinese culture belongs to a high-context one, while British and American cultures are low-context cultures.<sup>28</sup> A high-context communication or message is one in which most of the information is already in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicitly transmitted part of the message. A low context communication is just the opposite; i.e.,



the mass of information is vested in the explicit code.<sup>28</sup> From the above definitions, we can see that high-context cultures change very little over time and the meaning is not necessarily contained in words and is often indirect and implicit. Information is often provided in more various ways and the meaning is often conveyed through subtler channels. In low-context cultures, the verbal message contains most of the information and very little is embedded in the context or the participants. So the communication tends to be direct and complicit--that is, everything needs to be stated and people are more prone to making very explicit statements and have little capability with nonverbal forms of communication. Because of this, many problems will arise in the process of Chinese-English or English-Chinese translation and it is very difficult to achieve the maximal relevance. For example, English readers may find it very difficult to understand a version translated from Chinese if the translator doesn't pay enough attention to the above differences. In order to achieve the maximal relevance, the translator must provide more contextual information by giving some detailed, clear-cut and definite message apart from the original literal meaning. He can take up some effective translation approaches. For example, he may seek help from liberal translation or translation with compensation to provide more contextual information. For example, the implicit Chinese proverb 解铃还需系铃人 can be liberally translated into 捏 it is better for the doer to undo what he has done. And the translator can take the approach with compensation to translate 木已成舟 into 擗 that done is done, and cannot be undone. These approaches can help the readers to understand the translated version with less processing efforts and thus the maximal relevance can be achieved.

### 3.2 Various translation approaches

Based on the comparative study between English and Chinese proverbs and the rationale for various translation approaches, the translator may take up some correlative translation approaches. They are synonymous replacement, literal translation, liberal translation and translation with compensation.

#### 3.2.1 Synonymous replacement

One proverb may have its synonymous proverb in the counterpart language. If the two synonymous proverbs are not only identical in their meanings, but also have the same or quite similar images or metaphors, the translator may borrow the synonymous proverb from the target language to translate the one in question. For example, Chinese people have a proverb 隔墙有耳. And coincidentally, the English proverb *Walls have ears* conveys the same meaning as the Chinese one. Moreover, there is no difference in the image, metaphor and sentence structure.

Sometimes, a proverb carries no strong national tint and does not take up any images or metaphors and its meaning can be drawn from the individual component words. If the proverb in question has a synonymous proverb in the source language and the counterpart proverb also has the same features, the two can be perfectly translated into each other. For example, while translating the Chinese proverb 既往不咎, the translator may choose *Let bygones be bygones*. And for the English proverb *If you don't compare, you are in the dark; the moment you do, you get a shock*, the translator may choose the ready-made Chinese proverb 不比不知道, 一比吓一跳.

On some occasions, the translator may come across a proverb that has completely the same implied meaning as one in the source language but their images and metaphors are not in consistency to each other. If the image doesn't carry any strong national tint, the adoptable approach is to borrow the synonymous expression in the target language. For example, Chinese people have a proverb 勿杀鸡取卵 to warn people not to be led the nose by avarice. Similarly English people have *Kill not the goose that lays golden eggs*. The two convey the same implied meaning, but the former has 撵 as a metaphor while the latter has 搯oose? In this case, the translator cannot translate 勿杀鸡取卵 into 搯ill not the hen that lays golden eggs? Nor can he translate *Kill not the goose that lays golden eggs* into

擗鹁倍焯÷襪. Otherwise, the readers of the target language may get confused. The translator may just borrow the counterpart proverb to translate the one in question. This makes it very easy and convenient for the target language readers to understand the proverb to be translated.

Some proverbs may carry allusions but it is already impossible to trace down to their origins. If the allusions are losing or have lost their cultural tint, the translator may regard them as only one component part of the proverb and it is not necessary to translate them to the full. If there exists a proverb in the target language that conveys the same meaning and is not tinged with any strong national tint, the adoptable approach is to borrow the ready-made synonymous one. For example, Chinese people may cite 塞翁失马, 焉知非福 to convey the meaning 搯 loss may turn out to be a gain? While translating the Chinese proverb, the translator doesn't have to take the trouble translating it into 搯 hen the old man on the frontier lost his mare, who could have guessed it was a blessing in disguise?? Though this version transmits the original meaning, it is not concise enough and it appears tedious and redundant. In fact, a ready-made English proverb *Misfortune might be a blessing in disguise* can do the work better.

The synonymous translation approach can really save a lot. For the translator, he can provide enough contextual effects without grinding his mind; for the readers, with very little processing effort, he can get the meaning of the original proverb. And thus, the maximal relevance can be achieved.

### 3.2.2 Literal translation

Literal translation is an approach adopted to keep the original meaning, image and structure to the full. Literal translation is by no means word-for-word translation. The translated version must conform to the standard of the target language and it is not supposed to bring about wrong associations in the reader's mind. Otherwise, in reading the translated version, the readers may fail to achieve the maximal relevance and to understand the meaning of the original proverb. In a word, the translator must take the readers' expectation into account and realize the maximal relevance.

Some proverbs carry strong and peculiar tint of a particular culture. In order to introduce the culture of the source language to the readers of the target language, the translator should expose the culture-loaded terms to them as long as the version conveys the original meaning and does not lead to the reader's misunderstandings. In fact, the readers of the target language have accepted some literally translated versions after long-term usage. For example, the literally translated version of *All roads lead to Rome* 搯路醮舐吠 靡頂 has been completely accepted by Chinese readers and it has become a Chinese proverb.

Sometimes, a proverb does not take up any image or metaphor and its meaning can be directly drawn from the individual meanings of its component words. If the proverb in question doesn't have a synonymous proverb in the target language, the translator may take up literal translation approach. For example, *If you lack health, you lack everything* can be translated into 搯挥薪】稻免挥幸磺祇; *If you don't improve today, you will grow worse tomorrow* can be translated into 搯褪穀唤 剑 魑旄崧浜髻 and *If you don't like it, you may lump it* can be translated into 搯版幌不端 偷萌淌芩猷. While *少壮不努力, 老大徒伤悲* can be literally translated into 搯f one does not work hard when young, it will be useless for him to lament when old?

Some proverbs won't cause misunderstandings if translated literally although they carry some images. The Chinese proverb 种瓜得瓜, 种豆得豆 can be translated into 搯f you sow melon seeds, you will reap melon; if you sow peas, you will reap peas? For the English proverb *Barking dogs seldom bite*, the translator may translate it into 搯腿 灰 藿. All the mentioned translated versions reflect the image, implied meaning and sentence pattern of the original proverb to the full. Provided with enough contextual effects, the

readers, with little processing effort, can achieve the maximal relevance while reading the translated version.

Here are some proverbs and their literally translated version:

*If you run after two hares, you will catch neither.* 同时追两兔，全都抓不住。

*An empty sack cannot stand straight.* 空袋立不直。

*No bees, no honey; no work, no money.* 没有蜜蜂就没有蜂蜜，没有劳动就没有金钱。

亲戚多，麻烦多。If you have a lot of relatives, you have a lot of trouble.

活到老，学到老。As long as you live, keep learning.

清官难断家务事。Even good officials cannot settle family troubles.

Literal translation is very helpful for the readers of the target language to know what things actually are in the source language. So it is very beneficial in cultural transmission.

### 3.2.3 Liberal translation

Liberal translation is an approach in which a translator gives priority to the meaning of the original proverb but puts the image and structure in the second place.

Sometimes, the meaning of a proverb cannot be drawn from the literal meaning of its individual component words and its meaning is given priority to instead of its cultural tint such as its image or metaphor. Meanwhile, it doesn't have a synonymous proverb in the target language or even if it has, the synonymous proverb cannot be borrowed directly because of its distinctive cultural color or something else. In this case, literal translation doesn't do and the translator has to give priority to the meaning. For example, English-speaking peoples cite *Diamond cut diamond* to show that there are always people who make you pale into insignificance by comparison. If the translator takes up literal translation approach and translates it into 擒贼先擒王, it will throw the Chinese readers into bewilderment. He/She may translate it into 擒贼先擒王 instead. The version is very appropriate to convey the implied meaning of the original proverb. Similarly, the translator cannot translate *Nightly prayer makes the day shine* into 擒贼先擒王. The liberally translated version 搭挂沟桓妨 杖占 闾 is much more desirable and acceptable. And the two Chinese proverbs 天有不测风云, 人有旦夕祸福 and 近朱者赤, 近墨者黑 can be respectively translated liberally into "Man's fortune is as uncertain as the weather." and 搨 becomes alike with one搨 company."/P>

Here are some other examples of liberal translation:

*Everyman has a fool in his sleeve.* 人人都有糊涂时。

不到黄河不死心。Never give up until all hope is gone.

*A door must be either shut or open.* 不要脚踏两只船。

前车之覆，后车之鉴。One should learn from one's past.

Some proverbs may carry allusions but it is already impossible to trace down to their origins. So the allusions are losing or have lost their cultural tint. For these allusions, the translator may regard them as only one component part of the proverb and it is not necessary to translate them. If this type of proverbs happens to have no

synonymous proverbs in the counterpart language (or even if they have, the synonymous proverbs carry distinctive cultural tint), the translator may take up liberal approach. For example, Chinese people have a proverb *熟读王叔和, 不如临症多*. Wang Shuhe is a renowned doctor in the Jin Dynasty and he bequeathed the later generations many valuable medical books. In spite of this, Wang Shuhe's popularity is to some degree confined to the medical field and very few common people know anything about him. In this case, it is not necessary for the translator to take the trouble translating this allusion. His/Her prior job is to make the implied meaning of this proverb clear. That is, *捏* is clinical practice but not just reading medical books that makes a real doctor? For another one *王婆卖瓜, 自卖自夸*, most people are unable to find out its origin and the allusion has lost its national tint and it acts as only a component part of the proverb. While translating this proverb, the translator should place the meaning in the first place and may translate it into *搨* tends to consider what one has no ordinary being?

### 3.2.4 Translation with compensation

Sometimes, one approach cannot convey the meaning of the original proverb to the full. Because Chinese belong to a high-context culture and English is low-context, many problems will arise in the process of Chinese-English or English-Chinese translation and it is very difficult to achieve the maximal relevance. For example, English readers may find it very difficult to understand a version translated from Chinese if the translator doesn't pay enough attention to the above point. In order to achieve the maximal relevance, the translator must provide more contextual information by giving some detailed, clear-cut and definite message apart from the original literal meaning. He can take up some effective translation approaches. For example, he may seek help from translation with compensation to provide more contextual information. This can help the readers to understand the translated version with less processing effort and thus the maximal relevance can be achieved. This includes: to make notes or to add some information as further explanation, to take up blending approaches, to make markers of emotional color.

The translator can make notes when it is necessary. For example, if a translator takes up literal translation approach and translates *三个臭皮匠, 顶个诸葛亮* into *搨* three cobblers combined equal Zhu Geliang? the English readers may be at a loss because they don't know who Zhu Geliang is. Zhu Geliang is a typically culture-loaded term and the version unavoidably results in cultural blank and even cultural shock. In order to convey the cultural information to the full, the translator may make a note at the end of the version and get *搨* three cobblers combined equal Zhu Geliang

Zhu Geliang is the wisest man in China's history.

To make notes is a very common and convenient way to compensate the loss of information in translating proverbs. The note must be concise and explicit in length and appropriate and exact in wording. Otherwise, it will be an unnecessary move to make it.

Apart from making notes, the translator may also add some words to the literally translated version, for example, to have the above Chinese proverb translated into *搨* three cobblers with their wits combined equal Zhu Geliang the master mind? The added words make some further explanation of Zhu Geliang and they provide more contextual information. The addition is really a big help for the English readers to understand the meaning of the original Chinese proverb. According to the concrete conditions, the translator must decide where to make addition and how many words to add.

Sometimes, the translator has to take up blending translation approach to make compensation. Blending translation is an approach in which the translator takes up two or more than two approaches when a single one doesn't work out a satisfactory version. For example, just from the literally translated version of some proverbs, the readers may find it a really mind-grinding work to get the true meaning of the original proverb. In

this case, the translator may add the true meaning to the literally translated version. For example, while translating *Set a thief to catch a thief*, the translator may take up both literal translation approach and liberal translation approach. Hence, the translated version is 以贼捉贼, 以毒攻毒. And *There is no smoke without fire* can be translated into 无风不起浪, 事出必有因.

Another way to make compensation is to make markers of emotional color. Many proverbs carry distinct emotional color, either derogatory or commendatory. To help the readers of the target language to understand these proverbs better, the translator can make markers at the end of the translated version if it is necessary. For example, the original Chinese proverb 王婆卖瓜, 自卖自夸 is derogatory but the translated version 搵ne tends to consider what one has no ordinary being? seems to be neutral. In order to convey the original information to the full, the translator may add a marker at the end of the version and thus get 搵ne tends to consider what one has no ordinary being (derogatory)?

### 3.3. Some points worth attention in translation

In translating a proverb, the translator must pay attention to some fundamental points. This includes: to pay enough attention to the conditions in which proverbs are produced and applied; to distinguish the emotional color and the various language styles of proverbs; not to take the words literally and to pay attention to the non-grammatical points

#### 3.3.1. Attention to the conditions in which proverbs are produced and applied

Each proverb emerges in a certain historical period and is inevitably branded with the features of the period. While trying to understand the correct meaning of a proverb, sometimes, the translator must trace it back to the particular period when it came into being because some proverbs cannot be understood in isolation. An intimate acquaintance with the conditions in which a proverb originates and is applied is a big help in translating it properly.

For example, we have a Chinese proverb 伴君如伴虎. This proverb came into being in Chinese feudal society. 揸龜 refers to the emperor who enjoyed absolute power. His subjects had no choice but to obey him. Even if they chose to obey submissively, adversity and misfortune might befall on them. Now and then, they were at the emperor's mercy. The emperor could decide the destiny of his subjects— to live or to die. He was just like a tiger who tended to lose his temper anywhere and anytime. Once he was not in the right mood, some of his subjects would be down on their luck. So accompanying the emperor in the feudal society is really a life-and-death matter. To correctly understand this proverb, one cannot do without learning the conditions in which the proverb was created. Though Chinese people don't have an emperor any more, the proverb is still in popular application. For example, 揸龜 may refer to any tyrant-like person. Only by knowing the historical origin of a proverb can the translator understand it correctly and translate it appropriately.

A similar English proverb created by Irish people is *Nearest the king, nearest the gallows*.<sup>29</sup> 揸allows? is an instrument used to hang a person who might be supposed to have committed a certain kind of crime. Its original meaning is just like the Chinese one 伴君如伴虎. And as time goes on and with the political changes in Ireland, Irish people don't have a king any more. But the proverb is deeply rooted among people and it has come to mean almost the same as its Chinese correspondent.

Another example, Chinese people have a proverb 班门弄斧. This proverb originated from the working people. 搵鄆 is Lu Ban who was a renowned carpenter; 搵玲 is an axe which is used by a carpenter. It is said that Lu was such a distinguished carpenter that he could acquit himself splendidly from woodwork. People admire Lu so much that they have come to venerate him as the master in the field of carpentry. 揸獠 is to show off. Since Lu is

the greatest master of all carpenters, the one who wants to show off his skill at woodwork before Lu Ban would be regarded as one who doesn't see much of the world. Today, this proverb doesn't confine its meaning to only carpentry. It can be applied to any case in which a person lacks a sense of propriety before one who is of great learning and integrity.

A similar English proverb is *Never offer to teach a grandmother to suck eggs*. This proverb came into being among folk people. Everybody knows that an old lady may be quite good at kitchen work. How stupid it is to teach a grandmother to suck eggs!

### 3.3.2 To distinguish the emotional color of a proverb

To achieve an overall and profound analysis of a proverb, one mustn't neglect to distinguish its emotional color. A proverb may reflect the common people's attitude and inclination: whether it is for or against, approves or disapproves the idea in question. It is the translator's job to differentiate the distinction between the emotional colors. Only after this step can the translator understand the proverb properly and translate it satisfactorily. He cannot translate a derogatory proverb into a commendatory one, or vice versa.

Some proverbs are commendatory in emotional color. These proverbs are usually taken up to convey positive ideas, and they reflect people's favor or approval of somebody or something, e.g. *宁为玉碎, 不为瓦全*. This proverb, in a positive and praising tone, suggests people's approval and fondness.

On the contrary, some proverbs are derogatory in emotional color. They show negative ideas, people's disapproval and contempt. They are frequently used to reveal something that is false, ugly, hideous or backward. For example, *老鼠过街, 人人喊打; 搬起石头砸自己的脚; 偷鸡不成蚀把米* and *狗改不了吃屎*. Some English proverbs such as *An ill payer never wants an excuse* and *Mad dogs bite the hands that feed them* are derogatory in emotional color.

Besides the above two emotional colors, we have many neutral proverbs such as meteorological proverbs, farmer's proverbs or those proverbs about life or knowledge. These proverbs, instead of showing favoritism or resentment, might just state a matter as it is. For example, *谋事在人, 成事在天; 天有不测风云, 人有旦夕祸福; Keeping is harder than winning* and *All is fair in war*.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.3.3 Attention to the various language styles of proverbs

Proverbs come into being in different ages and are created by people of various social status, profession, artistic appreciation, temperament, etc. They may carry all the above traces. They go along naturally and aptly with the unique and particular language styles. And this leads to the different styles of proverbs, maybe classical, refined or popular in tastes. For example, the three Chinese proverbs *矮子里面挑长子; 山中无老虎, 猴子称霸王* and *蜀中无大将, 廖化当先锋*<sup>25</sup> have the same meanings. The first two are very colloquial and applicable to spoken language while the third one is a bit formal and applies to written language. The synonymous English proverbs are *Among the blind the one-eyed man is king* and *When all fruit fails, welcome haws*.<sup>25</sup> The former one is colloquial while the latter one is formal. The translator must take this into consideration while translating them. He cannot translate a colloquial proverb into a formal and elegant one or vice versa. This is really a challenge for the translator. He mustn't neglect the different language style of the proverb in question.

Some proverbs came into being in the far remote ages or they might have come from some classical works. These proverbs also tend to be classical in language styles. While

translating these proverbs, the translator should try to keep the original style provided that the translated version is not hard for the readers to understand and can convey the original meaning. For example, 己所不欲, 勿施与人 and 祸兮福所依, 福兮祸所伏 can be respectively translated into *Do not unto others what you would not be done by* and *Good fortune lieth within bad, bad fortune lurkth within good*.<sup>31</sup> The underlined words in the two versions all help to keep the antique and quaint style of the original proverbs. And *A soft answer turnth away wrath* and *Whom the lord loveth he chastenth* can be translated into 婉言可以释怒 and 神若爱之, 必先管之.<sup>32</sup> In translating such proverbs, semantic correctness is of the first importance. Only after the translator conveys the original meaning to the full can he try to keep the original language style. If the translator, regardless of the meaning of the source language proverb, goes too far just in order to keep the original style, he will find himself having lost a lot while trying to save only a little.

### 3.3.4 Not taking the words literally

措 proverb is much matter decocted into few words? SUP>12. Proverbs are short in form but rich in meaning. Most of them are concise but comprehensive. The implications of many proverbs cannot be derived from the literal meanings of the component words. Nor can they be translated into seemingly similar proverbs. The translator must take the whole proverb into consideration and give prominence to its central idea.

For example, *A closed mouth caught no flies* may remind the translator of the Chinese proverb 病从口入 at first sight because 戢 lies? are often correlated with diseases. But in fact, 戢 lies? here has nothing to do with any kind of disease but stands for 搯rouble? The implied meaning of the proverb is 措 person who talks carelessly exposes himself to trouble? So the correct translation is 祸从口出 or 嘴紧不招祸. Similarly, the translator cannot translate *Honey is not for the ass 担 mouth* into 狼吞虎咽的人不配吃精美的食物 because here, 揆 ss? doesn't refer to 揆 person who devours food ravenously? nor 搯oney? refers to 搯efined food? Instead, they respectively refer to 揆 fool? and 搯persuasion? The true meaning of this proverb is 搯persuasion will not bring any effect on fools? So it may be translated into 好言好语劝不醒傻瓜.

### 3.3.5 Pay attention to the non-grammatical points

Due to various reasons such as the use of archaism, irregularly expressive ways or colloquialism, some proverbs may not conform to the current grammatical rules and are grammatically unanalysable. In translating such proverbs, enough attention must be given to these ungrammatical points.

The two proverbs *Care killed a cat* and *The course of true love never did run smooth* are such ungrammatical examples. They are both in the simple past tense but they reveal two irrefutable truths. So the translated version shouldn't carry any mark of the past. They can be translated into 忧虑伤身 and 好事多磨.

Sometimes, some irregular sentence patterns can also become obstacles to the translator. The translator must study these proverbs thoroughly so as to get the correct understanding.

*It is good horse that never stumbles* and *It is a skillful technician that never blunders* are such proverbs. According to the current grammar, they can be rendered into 好马永不失足 and 巧匠永不会出错. But it is far from correct. The grammatical structures of the two proverbs belong to Shakespeare 担 ages and they are not in agreement to the current usage. The two proverbs can be separately adapted into 搯very horse stumbles? and 搯very technician, no matter how skilful he is, blunders sometimes? Accordingly, the correct Chinese translation is 人有失手, 马有失蹄 and 工匠再灵巧, 差错免不了.

Some similar examples:

*It is a long lane that has no turning.* (路必有弯, 事必有变)

*It is an ill wind that blows nobody good.* (再恶的风, 也不会吹得人人不舒服; 再坏的事, 也会有人从中收益; 有损于此者, 或许有利于彼)

## Chapter Four.

### Conclusion

Proverbs are the cream of a language and the crystal of national wisdom and experience. Carrying great cultural information, they appropriately reflect the relation between culture and language. As a product of a particular cultural background, proverbs are closely related to a nation's culture and enjoy great cultural values. They provide interesting clues to a nation's geography, history, social conventions, religion and literature. So proverbs are a great help in learning a language and a nation's culture.

English and Chinese proverbs, imprinted by the two nations' cultural generalities and differences, have their similarities and differences. A comparative study of them can help a language learner to learn a language efficiently and proficiently so language learning may become a much easier job. For a translator, the study is much more necessary because translation itself is a cross-culture communication activity. Only after an analytical and systematical study of the proverbs can a translator fulfill his task to achieve a desirable communication. And the study is really worthwhile in anthropological sense. The emerging, development and death of proverbs are some valuable clues to anthropologists in their research.

The translation approaches the author is going to put forward are based on the relevance theory. Under the relevance theory, communication is an ostensive-inferential process. Though the relevance theory is not directly correlated with translation, it can interpret and guide translation. Thanks to the relevance theory, now the researchers have enough reasons to study the translating process, not only the translated version itself. As a reader and a speaker as well, the translator's dual role leads to his dual mission. First, he should understand the original text fully to achieve the maximal relevance. Then he must transfer the original text from one language into another and make the maximal relevance reappear before the readers. That is to say, in the process of translation, he should guarantee the maximal relevance of the inference, and as for the translated version, he must assure himself that it is the optimum reappearing of the original. In translation of proverbs, another fact must be taken into consideration: Chinese culture is a high-context culture while English is a low-context culture. Some appropriate approaches such as synonymous replacement, literal translation, liberal translation and translation with compensation must be taken to achieve the maximal relevance. A good translation should be as close as possible to the original proverb in semantic transmission, pragmatic function, cultural tint and language style.

In translating proverbs, a translator should have an overall and profound analysis of them in their cultural background. Instead of focusing his attention on the surface layer, a translator must penetrate into the profundity of the proverb in question, which includes: to pay enough attention to the conditions in which proverbs are produced and applied; to distinguish the emotional color and the various language styles of proverbs; to pay attention to the non-grammatical points instead of taking the words too literally.

The comparative study must be omnibearing and profound. And it must be put in a comprehensive cultural background. This thesis, however, is confined to only some aspects. So a further study must be carried out to a more satisfactory extent. Proverbs, being an important part of a language and culture, really deserve such a study.

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