

## 摘 要

任何语言交际都是在特定的语境之下发生的。语境与语言交际之间的密切关系导致了语境与翻译这种特殊的跨文化交际行为之间的重要关系。文化语境是语境研究中一个不可或缺的重要分支。近年来,随着跨文化交际行为的日益繁荣,文化语境对翻译的影响力也已日益凸现出来,成为一个颇有意义的研究领域。到目前为止,关于文化语境的研究大多还比较笼统。涉及到翻译中的文化语境研究就更是凤毛麟角了。而且,大多数国内学者多倾向于从静态的角度探讨文化语境对诸如习语、广告等具体翻译实践的影响。因此,本文拟对翻译中的文化语境做一个详尽的分析,并在此基础上,从顺应理论这一语用学角度进一步探讨如何动态地处理翻译中的文化语境问题。

本文首先回顾了国内外已有的关于语境及文化语境的相关研究。在此基础上,从三个不同的视角出发,详细探讨了翻译过程中文化语境的分类,即:从文化的不同分类的角度出发划分的高层、大众及深层文化语境;从翻译过程不同阶段的角度出发划分的原语文化语境、译入语文化语境和交际者文化语境;从文学翻译的角度出发划分的内部、外部文化语境。并进一步研究了翻译过程中文化语境两大主要功能:翻译理解阶段的文化语境的解释功能(主要体现在理解隐含意义和排除歧义两个方面);翻译表达阶段的文化语境的制约功能。

通过上述分析可以看出,翻译中的文化语境是复杂的,多层面的,并且在翻译过程的不同阶段发挥着不同的作用。因此,作为翻译交际活动的中介者,译者面临着这样一个重要问题:如何恰当地处理翻译中的文化语境?这也正是本论文的第二个重要的研究方面。翻译过程不仅是一个特殊的跨文化交际过程,也是一个动态过程。在这一动态翻译过程中所涉及到的文化语境并非一成不变,而是随着交际的发展而发展,并在翻译过程的不同阶段发挥着不同的作用。本文引入 Jef Verschueren 的顺应理论,并以此为理论支持,深入探讨了翻译这一特殊的跨文化交际过程中的动态文化语境顺应模式。如模式所示:从译者的角度出发,翻译过程可以被看作是表达阶段和理解阶段的统一体。这个统一体内包括了原语文化语境、原文作者文化语境、译者文化语境、译入语文化语境

和目的语读者文化语境。在翻译的理解阶段，译者作为原语文本的读者可能会受到前三种文化语境或其中任意几种语境的组合的影响，并动态地对其做出种种顺应，以完成正确解读原语文本的交际任务。在翻译的表达阶段，译者作为译文的作者可能会受到上述五种文化语境或其中任意几种语境的组合的影响，并动态地对其做出顺应，以完成恰当翻译文本的交际任务。需要指出的是，正如动态性是顺应理论的核心一样，动态顺应也被视作是动态文化语境顺应模式的核心。译者作为交际中的协调者，在翻译的不同阶段扮演着不同的角色，同时又动态地对相应的文化语境做出种种顺应，以完成预期的交际任务。

**关键词：**语境；文化语境；顺应理论；动态文化语境顺应模式；动态性

## ABSTRACT

Any linguistic communication cannot go without certain context. The close relationship between context and linguistic communication leads to an important relationship between context and translation that is viewed as a special kind of cross-cultural communication. Cultural context is one of the most important branches in context. Recently, with the prosperity of cross-cultural communication, the influence of cultural context on translation has become more and more predominant and accordingly offers a very significant space for us to explore. Up to now, researches on cultural context are relatively general and rare, let alone the systematic research on cultural context in translation. Besides, domestic scholars usually tend to statically study the influence of cultural context on specific translating practices, such as translating idioms, ad. etc.

This thesis firstly reviews the relevant literatures of context and cultural context both abroad and home, on the basis of which, a detailed exploration of classifications of cultural context from three different perspectives is made, i.e. high, popular and deep cultural context from the angle of classification of culture; SL cultural context, TL cultural context and communicator's cultural context from the angle of different stages in translating process; internal and external cultural context from the angle of literary translation. Next, two main functions of cultural context in translation are discussed respectively: the interpretative function of cultural context at the understanding stage of translation which is mainly reflected in two aspects: the function of understanding implications and the function of removing ambiguity; the restrictive function of both the SL and TL cultural contexts at the expressing stage of translation.

Through the above analysis, it could be seen clearly that cultural context involved in translation is multi-layer and complicated and plays different roles at different stages of translation. So, as the mediator in the

communicative process of translation, the translator has to face such an important problem as “how should they properly deal with cultural context in translation”, which is the second important research aspect of this thesis. The process of translation is not only a special kind of cross-cultural communication but also a dynamic communication, within which, the involved cultural contexts are not invariable but dynamically change with the development of the communicative process of translation and exert different influences at different stages of translation. This thesis introduces Jef Verschueren’s theory of adaptation and let it be the theoretical support to further discuss the dynamic model of cultural contextual adaptation in translation. As the model shows, from the angle of the translator, the process of translation can be viewed as a unity of understanding stage and expressing stage, in which included are five cultural contexts: SL cultural context, SL writer’s personal cultural context, translator’s personal cultural context, TL cultural context and TL reader’s personal cultural context. At the understanding stage of translation, the translator as the reader of the SL text may be influenced by the first three kinds of cultural contexts or certain combinations among the three and dynamically adapt to them for the purpose of achieving the communicative task of correctly understanding the SL text. At the expressing stage of translation, the translator as the writer of the TL rendering may be influenced by the above five kinds of cultural contexts or certain combinations among the five and dynamically adapt to them for the purpose of achieving the communicative task of properly translating. It should be noticed here that dynamics as the core of theory of adaptation is also viewed as the key to the model of cultural contextual adaptation. Translators as mediators in translation play different roles in different stages of translation and consciously or unconsciously make dynamic adaptations to the relevant cultural contexts to accomplish different communicative tasks.

**KEY WORDS:** context; cultural context; theory of adaptation; model of cultural contextual adaptation; dynamics

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Yet I have obligation to claim that I am independently responsible for my thesis. Needless to say, any errors that may remain are solely my responsibility.

## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

Context as a simple linguistic concept has experienced a high development during less than 100 years owing to its close relationship with language use. It is commonly recognized that language can not be treated as an isolated entity. Rather, it must be expressed and interpreted in a specific environment, i.e. in the specific context. Many scholars both abroad and home have made detailed discussions about classifications and functions of context in the process of language communication and have made rich achievements. Recently, with the prosperity of cross-cultural communication, cultural context, as an important branch of theory of context, has attracted more and more attentions because of its close ties with culture and strong influence on cross-cultural communication.

### **1.1 The motivation, object and significance of the present research**

Since theory of communication was introduced to translation, many scholars have regarded translation as a special kind of cross-cultural communication which involves switches not only between two languages but also between two cultures. Therefore, from certain angle, the communicative process of translation is also a process of cultural exchange. In other words, communicative process of translation always occurs in certain cultural context. This close relationship between cultural context and translation makes researches on cultural context in translation become a very significant area. In addition, with the denotation of cultural context being expanding and its connotation becoming much richer than before, influence of cultural context on translation is becoming stronger and stronger. Therefore, detailed and systematic analysis of definitions, classifications and functions of cultural context in translation will be very necessary and meaningful and thus becomes one of the main studying objects of the present thesis.

In the light of the great influence of cultural context on translation, scholars also probed into effective ways of dealing with cultural context in translation. In recent years, domestic researches on cultural context in translation have appeared but were almost static-oriented. As a matter of fact, translation is a dynamic process of communication, in which translator is in the middle, plays the role of mediator between SL writer and TL reader and faces multi-layer and dynamic cultural contexts as well. With the development

of communicative process of translation, cultural contexts involved also change and exert various influences at different stages of translation too. Consequently, a dynamic research on cultural context in translation is needed on a basis of a full discussion of classifications and functions of cultural context in translation. Guided by Jef Verschueren's theory of adaptation, the present thesis is going to explore the dynamic model of cultural contextual adaptation in translation which becomes the second studying object of this study, in hopes of finding out, with the changes in translator's status, what cultural contexts may be dynamically adapted to at different stages of translation to achieve different communicative tasks.

Explorations of cultural context in translation and the dynamic model of cultural contextual adaptation are valuable to answer the following questions:

1. How should the translator view cultural context in translation?
2. How does cultural context influence the process of translation?
3. How should the translator dynamically deal with the cultural context in different stages of translation?

As a result of successfully answering these questions, translators may be capable of correctly judging, weighing and finally dealing with the cultural contexts involved at different stages of translation when they meet messages with cultural deposits. And through proper, flexible and dynamic adaptations to some cultural contexts, they could smoothly achieve the communicative tasks of understanding the SL text at the understanding stage of translation and translating at the expressing stage of translation.

Besides, researches in this thesis may also contribute to offering some criterions to translating critics who can evaluate the qualities of different translators' rendering of messages with cultural deposits through analyzing what cultural contexts being adapted.

## **1.2 The theoretical support and relevant studying approaches of this research**

The Belgian pragmatist Jef Verschueren (1999) understands and elucidates pragmatics from a new angle. In his *Understanding Pragmatics*, Verschueren proposes a pragmatic perspective on language use and assumes language use to be a continuous making of linguistic choices with different degree of salience for the purpose of

adaptation. The author holds that translation in essence represents a process of continuous making of choices, in which the translator will dynamically make adaptations to cultural contexts involved. In this regard, theory of adaptation will be an ideal theoretical support of this thesis. And accordingly, studying approaches based on this pragmatic-oriented theory is used to discuss the dynamic model of cultural contextual adaptation in translation from this relatively new pragmatic angle. Hopefully, this dynamic research on cultural context will enlighten translators as to effectively dealing with cultural context in translation.

Besides, abundant examples are offered through out this thesis for the purpose of avoiding being subjective.

### **1.3 The outline of this thesis**

This thesis altogether consists of six chapters. Chapter One, the current chapter provides a brief introduction to the motivation, object, significance, theoretical support and relevant studying approaches of the study. Then Chapter Two gives a general literature review of researches on context, cultural context and dealing with cultural context respectively. Chapter Three as the first main part of this thesis makes a detailed and systematic analysis of classifications of cultural context from three angles and the relevant functions it takes in different stages of translation, on the basis of which, a deep discussion of dealing with cultural context is extended in the following two chapters: Chapter Four mainly introduces Jef Verschueren's theory of adaptation which is used as the theoretical support of the next chapter. Aiming at handling of cultural context in translation, Chapter Five as the second and the most important part of this thesis mainly discusses the dynamic model of cultural contextual adaptation in translation. Chapter Six sums up the main findings of this thesis and points out the limitations and direction of future research in this area.



## **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 A review of researches on context**

Context, whose original meaning is “joining together”, was borrowed from the Latin word “contextus”. It has been a very important linguistic concept since it was firstly put forward by Malinowski in the 1920s. Both scholars home and abroad have done a lot of job in this field and thus got many fruitful achievements.

#### **2.1.1 Western researches on context**

It was Bronislaw Malinowski, a Polish anthropological linguist, who initiated the concept of context in his famous paper “The problem of Meaning in primitive Languages” (1923). He argued that language “ought to be regarded and studied against the background of human activities and as a mode of human behavior in practical matters... It is a mode of action and not an instrument of reflection” (Malinowski 1923:312). “Meaning...does not come from contemplation of things, or analysis of occurrences, but in practical and active acquaintance with relevant situations. The real knowledge of a word comes through the practice of appropriately using it within a certain situation”(Malinowski 1923:325). Malinowski classified context into two types: context of situation and context of culture. The former indicates the concrete situational context where the language communication takes place; the latter refers to interlocutors’ social-cultural background. In his opinion, only in the overall context of situation and context of culture are the utterances that people produced understood correctly.

J. R. Firth, one of the representatives of London school, accepted and developed Malinowski’s thought of context and brought out the contextual theory of meaning. He made detailed description about context in his paper “Personality and language in society”. Firth widened the boundary of context and argued that included in context are not only the preceding\following parts of a sentence or a paragraph but also the relations between language and social environment. He regards the former as context composed of language factors, or the linguistic context, and the latter as “context of situation”. Firth lays high emphasis on the “context of situation”, which is defined as comprising the following factors of meaning:

- A. The relevant features of participants: persons, personalities;
  - a. The verbal action of the participants;
  - b. The non-verbal action of the participants.
- B. The relevant objects;
- C. The effect of the verbal action.

“Firth’s main achievement lies in his introduction of social factors into context and lets it have the equal status as those linguistic factors”.(Han Caiying, Li Yue’e, 2002)

Getting enlightenment from Firth’s context of situation, Halliday, another expert of London school who made great contributions to context, used the term “register”, namely the context, in 1964. For him, register is “the clustering of semantic features according to situation type,” and “can be defined as a configuration of semantic resources that the member of a culture typically associates with a situation type”(Halliday,1978:111). He argued that register is concerned with three variables of field, mode and tenor. Field refers to “what is happening to the nature of the social action that is taking place,” which includes politics, science and technology, literature and daily life etc.; mode concerns "what it is that the participants are expecting language to do for them in that situation," or simply saying, the channel of communication: written or spoken; tenor has to do with who are taking part in the transaction as well as the “nature of the participants, their status and roles” (Hasan and Halliday, 1985:12). Halliday’s concept of register is “a useful abstraction linking variations of language to variations of social context”(Halliday, 1978:64).

After Halliday’s register, Dell Hymes(1974), an American social linguist, further developed the theory of context and put it into a very important situation. He coined a new term “communicative competence” and listed four aspects of communicative competence:

1. Whether something is formally possible.
2. Whether something is feasible with the means available.
3. Whether something is appropriate in the context in which it is said.
4. Whether something is in fact performed, and how often.

It’s quite clear that Hymes’ communicative competence goes further than just grammatical knowledge and includes psychological and socio-linguistic factors that address the fact that communication takes place in a context.

Hymes also developed eight components of speech situation, which are usually called SPEAKING model to promote the analysis of discourse as a series of speech events and speech acts within a cultural context, namely, setting and scene, participants, ends, act sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms and genre (Hymes, 1974). Hymes believed that being competent in communication requires knowing more than just the words and the grammar of the language. It is also necessary to know the rules about who says what to whom, when, where and how. These rules are usually tacit (unspoken) and differ from culture to culture. So, he intended to get insight into the speaker's competence to behave in an appropriate way in the course of their communication. He holds that understanding the social context of using language is a very important symbol of people's degree of mastering a language.

Lastly, in the theory of relevance, Sperber and Wilson (1986) regards context as the cognitive context which includes not only the specific contextual factors but also the individual knowledge. They think that the context is variable, not constant. In communication, the most important is mutual cognitive environment, not all of the listener's background knowledge. In order to ascertain the communicator's implication, audience must try to find out the optimal relevance between utterance and context, and then through inference achieve the best contextual effect.

### **2.1.2 Domestic researches on context**

Researches on context also started very early in China. In 1932, Mr. Chen Wangdao firstly initiated the term“**题旨情境**”from rhetoric perspective which is approximately equal to “context”, and proposed six aspects of context: why, what, who, where, when, and how. According to him, context should be divided into two types: context of linguistic factors and context of setting factors (Chen wangdao, 1971:7-8).

At the beginning of the 1960s, Wang Dechun put forward “the environment for language use” which is further defined as “**言语环境**” rather than “**语言环境**”. In his opinion, “**言语环境**” just refers to the context, which could be further classified into two types: objective factors and subjective factors. He argued: “Context refers to the environment for language use which includes objective factors as time, place, setting and object etc and subjective factors as language user's status, thinking, character, occupation, accomplishment, position and mood etc.”(Wang Dechun, 1983:64).

In the 1980s, with the development of communication theory, many scholars tended to study context from this perspective. Zhang Zhigong published a book *Modern Chinese* in 1982, in which he classified context as real context, social context and individual context. He says: "Within a relatively narrower scope, it is the real context that influences the meaning most directly, i.e. the real setting of speaking and hearing and the preceding\following words. Besides, natures and features of a society or an era and the detailed information of the participants, for instance, education, level of knowledge, life experience, language style and dialects etc., also belong to two kinds of context. In contrast with the real context, these two kinds of context could be named as context in a broad sense" (Zhang Zhigong, quoted from FengGuangyi, 1999:6). It is worth noting that the social context brought up by Zhang Zhigong refers to natures and features of a society which is quite different from social environment and Firth's "context of situation". In this book, he also argued that language is always used in certain communicative environment. Therefore, when analyzing some language phenomenon, we must associate it with the specific context it depends on.

Mr. Wang Jianping holds the view that context exists in the process of communication. He defines context as "all kinds of linguistic contexts and non-linguistic subjective and objective environmental factors which are depended on by those linguistic expressing ways to express a certain kind of meaning" (Wang Jian-ping, 1989:24). According to the criterion of being linguistic or non-linguistic, Wang Jianping classified context into linguistic context and extra-linguistic context within which a lot of detailed branches are made:

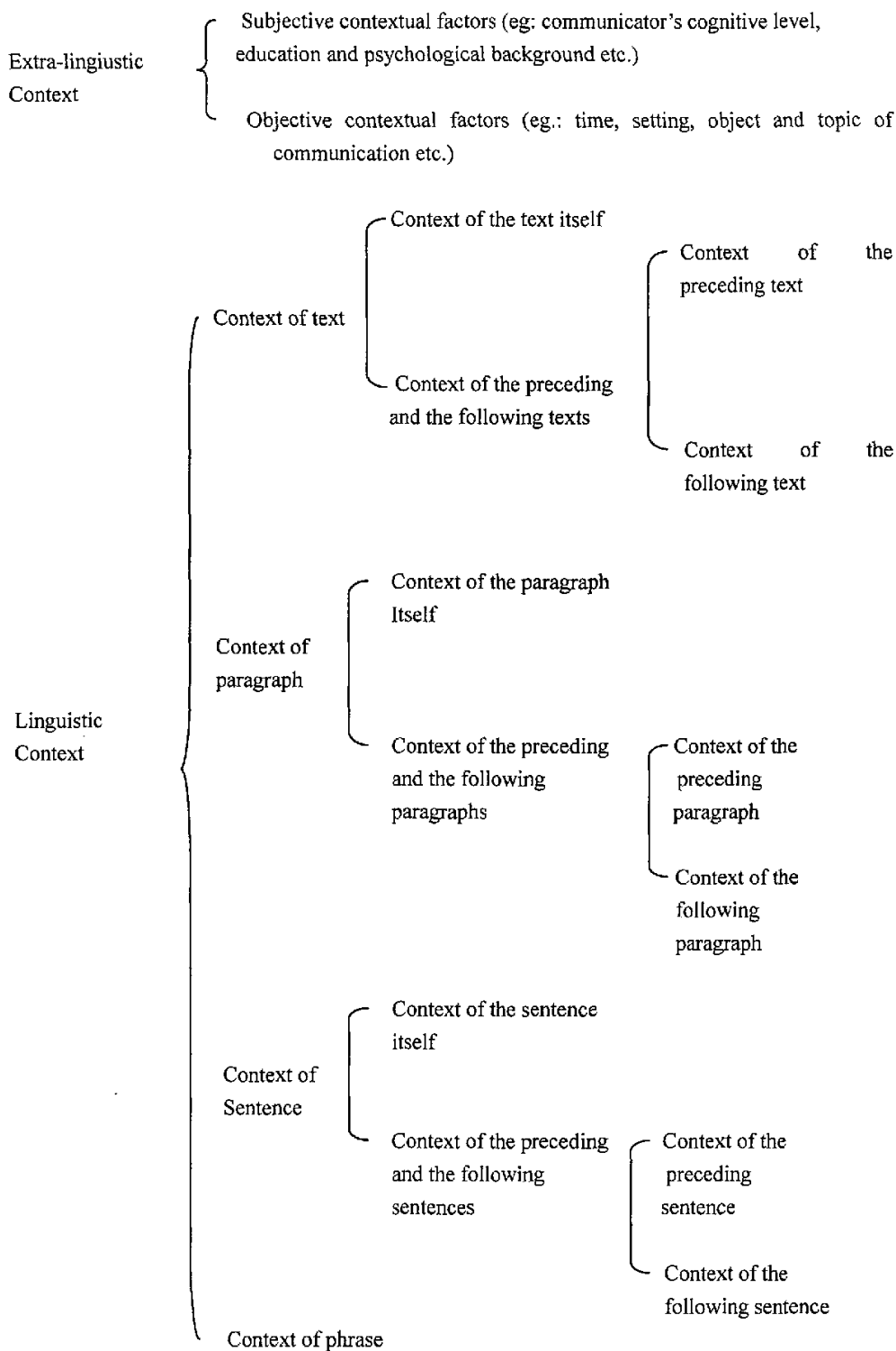


Figure1: Classification of context ( Wang Jianping, 1992: 86)

In the 1990s, Feng Guangyi did great contributions to the research on context. In his work *An Introduction to Chinese Context*, he thoroughly analyzed and compared definitions and classifications made by many scholars both home and abroad, on the basis of which, he made a very detailed classification of context including eight aspects:

- Macro context( including social context, natural context and humanistic psychological context) and micro context (phonetic context, semantic context and grammatical context);
- Explicit context (communicative time, place, setting, topic and detailed context etc.) and implicit context (communicative target, background information and pragmatic presupposition etc.);
- Simple context (context composed of explicit factors) and complicate context (context composed of implicit factors);
- Context of gist and context of situation;
- Emotional context (context made by people's emotions)and rational context (context controlled by people's ration);
- Logic context (context controlled by objective principles) and man-made context (context following the people's implicit communicative target);
- Simulated context (context made by speakers artificially for some specific purpose) and zero context (context without language use);
- Mono-lingual context, bi-lingual context and multi-lingual context.

After Feng Guangyi's discussion, Wang Jianhua, Zhou Mingqiang and Sheng Aiping also made a complete classification of context which is worth noting. In *A Research on Modern Chinese Context*, they classified context in three levels from the angle of pragmatic communication. In the first level, context could be divided into Intra-linguistic context, Extra-linguistic context and accompanied linguistic context in term of the relationships between language and context. In the second level, each type in the first level could be further divided into two smaller types: context of text and context between sentences of the Intra-linguistic context, cognitive background context and social cultural context of Extra-linguistic context and accompanied context and on-the-spot context of accompanied linguistic context. And these smaller contexts could still be divided more particularly into the third level. Through this classification, they argued that a complete,

systematic and opened net of context came into being

Apart from the very important researches on context we have mentioned above, there are also some other reasonable classifications of context. For instance, Pei Wen classified context into small context which refers to those linguistic and non-linguistic contexts that have direct and obvious influences on linguistic act, and big context which indicates those social cultural, stylistic and natural contexts that influence and control linguistic act indirectly and potentially (Pei Wen, 2000:11). Gao Shougang classified context into internal and external context (Gao Shougang, 1986). From the angle of stability, Kong Xiuxiang classified context into stable context (region, nation, class and career) and dynamic context (time and place, context, topic and participants) (Kong Xiuxiang, 1988). For the purpose of emphasizing the dynamic feature, Shen Zhen classified context into context of temporariness and context of background (Shen Zhen, 1993). Chen Zhi-an and Wen Xu made a summarization of classification of context: (1) context in a broad sense and context in a narrow sense; (2) situational context and the verbal context; (3) subjective and objective context; (4) implicated and explicated context; (5) real and fictitious context; (6) intra-linguistic and extra-linguistic context (Chen Zhi-an, Wen Xu, 1997).

From the above, we can see that the theory of context which developed from a simple linguistic concept to a complicated theoretic system is very complete now. Scholars' different ideas about context fully show the complicity of context itself. And at the same time, we must recognize that these researches are very important for us to better understand context from different perspectives and levels.

## **2.2 A review of researches on cultural context**

It has long been recognized that language is the carrier of culture and the impact of culture upon language is something intrinsic and indispensable. This close relationship between language and culture makes us never ignore the fact that cultural context always has huge influences on linguistic communication. As a matter of fact, cultural context, as one of the most important branch of contextual system, attracted a lot of attention long time ago. As what have been reviewed above, whatever what kind of classification of context the scholars made, they all mentioned cultural context which may be expressed in different terms and has slight differences of range.

Malinowski firstly brought up cultural context by using the term “context of culture”. His experience of working with Trobrian natives in the Trobrian Islands of the Western Pacific made him fully aware of the fact that comprehension of utterances would be impossible without taking the local culture into consideration. Accordingly, he enriched his notion of context by putting forward the conception of “context of culture” to describe the institutional and ideological background knowledge shared by participants in speech events. After him, Firth’s “context of situation”, Halliday’s “register”, Hymes’ SPEAKING mode and Sperber and Wilson’s cognitive context all include social cultural factors, or social non-linguistic factors.

In China, Huang Guowen defined cultural context perfectly: “Every language community has its own history, cultural customs, social conventions, way of thinking, moral outlook and values. The special way and factors which inflect those characteristics of a specific language community constitute the so-called cultural context”.(Huang Guo-wen, 2001) Mu Dan defined cultural context as “all knowledge deposited within a society, or long-established and ideological background knowledge shared by a nation in language communication, a system of knowledge which could be predicted, inferred and understood in the process of communication”(Mu Dan, 2000:89-91). Besides, Wang Jianping’s extra-linguistic context, Feng Guangyi’s macro context, Wang Jianhua, Zhou Mingqiang and Sheng Aiping’s social cultural context are all similar expressions of cultural context.

Though there are so many kinds of discussions about cultural context, they are all discussed in passing as an indispensable branch of context and therefore according to my point, are a little too general. Up to now, there is rare literature specializing in studying definition, classification and functions of cultural context. Pei Wen, a domestic scholar, holds that cultural context refers to those contextual factors which are represented in the form of culture. She made a classification of cultural context as follows:



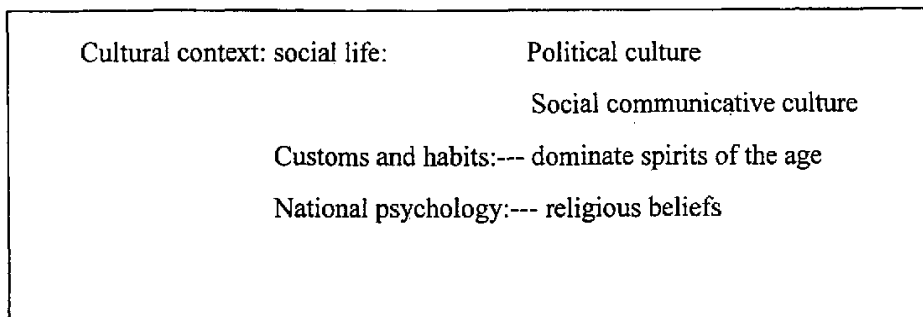


Figure2: Classification of cultural context ( Pei Wen, 2000: 179)

But this classification is still relatively less detailed. In fact, with the prosperity of cross-cultural communication, the denotation of cultural context is expanding and its connotation is becoming much richer than before. Thus, cultural context is playing a more and more important role in linguistic communications, especially in translation, a special kind of cross-cultural communication which involves switches between two languages and between two cultures. Therefore, it must be very necessary and meaningful to study cultural context in translation in detail from different angles and levels, which will be one of the main tasks of this thesis.

Here, the author also wants to make special mention of the difference between cultural context and cultural factors since there are so many people, including some famous scholars, tend to regard them as the same thing. As a matter of fact, they are different. Cultural context which belongs to contextual category is abstract and general. Though it is composed of detailed cultural factors, it is not equal to the totality of them because different perspectives can lead to different classifications of cultural context. And even from the same perspective, different cultural factors will be divided and combined into different cultural contexts in term of different conditions and accordingly have different influences on communications. In this thesis, the author will try to lay her emphases on analyzing cultural contexts from different perspective.

### **2.3 A review of researches on dealing with cultural context in translation**

Since influence of cultural context on translation is becoming more and more predominant today, it naturally arouses an important question: how should translators effectively deal with the involved cultural context in the process of translation? In this

area, domestic scholar Bao Huinan published *Cultural Context and Language Translation* in 2001, which mainly discusses the relationships among language, culture and translation through contrastive analysis of English and Chinese cultural psychology, cultural concept and cultural customs and lists detailed cultural factors and the corresponding translating methods (Bao Huinan, 2001). There are also many scholars who specially study the influence of cultural context on specific translating practices, such as translating idioms, ad., figurative image and brand etc.

The above researches in this field are all static-oriented. As a matter of fact, in the process of translation, cultural contexts involved always change dynamically. Therefore, it is very necessary and complementary to the traditional study to dynamically view and deal with cultural context in translation. In *understanding pragmatics*, Jef Verschueren proposes his idea of dynamic contextual adaptability which has been used to guide translation by few scholars recently, since translation is also viewed as a special kind of communication. Ge Lingling(2004:19-23) discusses the function of adaptability in the interpretation in translation. She holds that language expresses the contents of culture, which is composed of different layers. Therefore, in turning one language into another we actually deal with two different levels of culture. In the adaptability framework, translation can be defined as a dynamic process. Wang Xiaofeng(2004:41-44) probes into the adaptability of cultural context in translation on the basis of adaptability theory. She assumes that the concept of adaptability can provide a scientific and reasonable basis for translation criticism and points out it can enable people to evaluate translations from a new perspective, and thus promote the study of translation criticism. The author holds that Verschueren's dynamic contextual adaptability is pertinent to the study of dealing with cultural context in translation. But the present researches are far from thorough enough. Thus a detailed and comprehensive research on cultural contextual adaptation in translation is needed, which is another main attempt of this thesis.

## **Chapter 3 An Analysis of Cultural Context in Translation**

### **3.1 Relationships between cultural context and translation**

In order to understand the relationships between cultural context and translation, two premises must be made clear for a start.

Firstly, the process of communication always proceeds within certain context. Accordingly, information produced in the process of communication is always transmitted within certain context. Speakers and writers express their ideas through context. Listeners and readers understand utterances or texts with aid of context too. In the process of communication, the real meaning of the encoded information could reach the receptor only by penetrating successive lines of linguistic context, situational context and cultural context etc which fulfill functions of filtering, limiting and supplementing information. Similarly, the receptor of information must uncover veils of contexts for the purpose of fully understanding the meaning of the original information. ( Peng Liyuan, 2003)

Secondly, translation has long been recognized as a special kind of communication in the process of which translator transmits information of the SL text to receptors in another culture by using target language. It involves switches between two languages and two cultures at the same time. In recent twenty years, two obvious trends have occurred in researches on translation. One is theories of translation were deeply influenced by theory of communication. The other is the focus on studying linguistic switch in translation was turned to studying cultural switch. The combination of these two trends led to the view of regarding translation as a kind of cross-cultural communication. Many scholars used culture-related terms to refer to translation, for instance, Christiane Nord's "intercultural communication", Holz-Manttari's "intercultural cooperation", Andre Lefevere's "acculturation" and R. Daniel Shaw's "transculturation" etc. It has reached a common consensus that translation should be viewed not only as a switch of linguistic symbols but also as a mode of cultural transformation ( Guo Jianzhong, 1998).

In light of the two premises above, we can infer that translation, as a kind of communication, could not go without certain contexts. And especially as a kind of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic communication, translation must be influenced and limited by certain cultural contexts to a great extent. Therefore, the relationships between

cultural context and translation could be generalized as: translation always depends on certain cultural context and cultural context always guides and influences specific translating activities. The author would like to detail the relationships as follows:

Firstly, without certain cultural context, it may be impossible to correctly understand the SL text. It is quite important to translators to share as many as possible cultural contextual factors involved in SL text. Or, over and under translation may occur as a result of misunderstanding of the SL text. For example:

She opened it carelessly. "Oh, Uncle, why do you carry so much cash when you have a Dinner's Club Card?" she said sarcastically.

误译: 她粗心地打开钱包。“啊, 叔叔, 你既然有一张用餐证件, 为什么还要带这么多现金呀?” 她讥讽道。

The translator wrongly translated "Dinner's Club Card" as "用餐证件" in this sentence because he didn't understand the real cultural context in which "Dinner's Club Card" is a kind of credit card issued by a company called Dinner's Club.

Secondly, without certain cultural context, it may be impossible to appropriately express meaning by using the target language. For instance:

But we are getting ahead of the story.

不过, 我们说到故事的后头去了。

Here, the translator must fully consider Chinese cultural context in which "前" and "后" are expressed right in contrast with the West when they are used to refer to "past" and "future". A Chinese seems to be facing to the past, perceiving what has happened as ahead of him and what is yet to come as behind him. Therefore, "ahead" should be translated as "后头" so as to make the TL readers correctly understand the version.

Lastly, since translation is a dynamic process of communication, cultural contexts involved are also variant and complicated, which is worthy of detailed further study in the rest of this chapter.

### **3.2 Classifications of cultural context in translation**

Cultural context in translation could be regarded as a complicated web which

consists of different layers viewing from diverse angles. In this thesis, the author would study classifications of cultural context from three perspectives.

### **3.2.1 High, popular and deep cultural context of culture**

Cultural context, as implied by the name, has a strong relation with culture. So first of all, it is necessary to make clear what culture is.

The English word “culture” derives from the Latin word “cultura” whose basic meaning is “cultivate”. With the development of social civilization, the meaning of “culture” has been greatly extended and its connotation has been enriched enormously. Up to now, there are almost 200 kinds of definitions about culture on which scholars from various nations still can not reach an agreement with each other. A generally acknowledged classic definition was provided by Edward Burnett Tylor, the father of cultural anthropology, in his *Primitive Culture*: “Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” Samovar, Larry A and Porter Richard (1998) advanced a definition of their own. They define culture as the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, actions, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religions, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and artifacts acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. They also hold that culture is transmitted and maintained through communication and learning. Domestic scholars Deng Yanchang and Liu Runqing point out: “Culture refers to the total pattern of beliefs, customs, institutions, objects, and techniques that characterize the life of a human community... ‘Culture consists of all the shared products of human society’ (Robertson, 1981). This means not only such material things as cities, organizations and schools, but also non-material things such as ideas, customs, family patterns, languages. Putting it simply, culture refers to the entire way of life of a society, ‘the ways of a people’.” (Deng Yanchang, Liu Runqing, 1989:3)

In spite of different forms of representation, these definitions all embody some common features of culture: complex, multidimensional and pervasive. And in view of the enormous scope of culture, a good many scholars try to make reasonable classifications of culture. Some of them hold that no matter how many factors are included in culture, they all could be incorporated into two types: material culture and

non-material culture, just as Deng Yanchang and Liu Runqing have argued. Nida classified culture in detail into four levels: ecological, material, social and linguistic culture, on the basis of which Peter Newmark makes a similar classification into five types: ecology, material culture, social culture, organizations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts and gestures and habits. Stephan Dahl sorts culture as three types: surface, middle and internal culture. Besides, there's a popular classification which tends to divide culture into three categories: "material culture which refers to all the products of manufacture, institutional culture which refers to social system, religious system, ritual system, educational system and kinship system etc. and mental culture which refers to people's mentalities and behaviors, their beliefs, perceptions, concept of value, thought pattern etc." (Chen Hongwei, 2000:252). In this thesis, in the light of easy understanding and strong generality, the author inclines to classify it into high, popular and deep culture. And similarly, we could also classify cultural context into the high, popular and deep cultural context respectively in terms of the relevant classification of culture.

### 3.2.1.1 High cultural context

High culture includes philosophy, literature, religion and so on and is also called as culture with a big c. High cultural context should be paid more attentions when philosophical, literary and religious works are translated. Examples are very common in this respect:

I am not Hamlet.  
我决不犹豫。

Here, the translator must be familiar with the source high cultural context and then completely understand that Hamlet is a literary character in Shakespeare's famous play---*Hamlet*, who always hesitates about revenge for his father. So , the translator can not translate the sentence as “我不是哈姆雷特”directly.

There are also many religious characters in western countries, for example, Solomon (referring to the wise person now), Judas (a byword for traitors now) etc., who have become representatives of a certain kind of people and have certain innovations. About these words, translators must know the high cultural context very well. Otherwise,

a false translation will be inevitable.

### 3.2.1.2 Popular cultural context

Popular culture refers to the customs, habits, clothes, food, personal relationship etc., which is also called as culture with a small c. Translators frequently find they are in a certain popular cultural context because it is so close to the daily life. The author will not offer any specific examples here since they are very popular to people. But for the same reason, translators should continually keep an eye on it to avoid any ignorance.

### 3.2.1.3 Deep cultural context

Deep culture consists of values, aesthetic concept, time concept, way of dealing with problems etc. It is deep since it is concerned with the viewpoints or outlooks in people's mind. The deep cultural context is abstract but is very useful in translation.

王夫人见贾母不去，也不便去了。

Lady Wang would have liked to go but felt unable, even though the invitation was from her brother's wife, because she could see that Grandmother Jia did not want to. (Translated by Hawkes )

Why lady Wang felt unable to go? The reason is that Chinese people have a traditional ethic idea that the junior generation must comply with the elder member of a family. As a daughter-in-law, lady Wang can not leave before Grandmother Jia. This cultural implication has not been expressed in Hawkes' version.

## 3.2.2 SL cultural context, TL cultural context and communicators' cultural context

From the perspective of information theory, communication is a process of conveying messages from the speaker to the hearer, which includes both encoding and decoding messages in some setting. (Wang Xi-jie, 1996:308) (The setting refers to a certain context.) Translation is a special kind of communication in the process of which translators decode the source language in certain SL cultural context, encode them again by target language in certain TL cultural context, and then convey them to the target reader who decodes the version in certain cultural context. It involves "three stages as decoding information, switching information (or re-encoding) and re-decoding information, ie the stages of understanding, expressing and testing in translation"(Peng Liyuan, 2003:60). This complicated process can be seen more clearly through the

following figure:

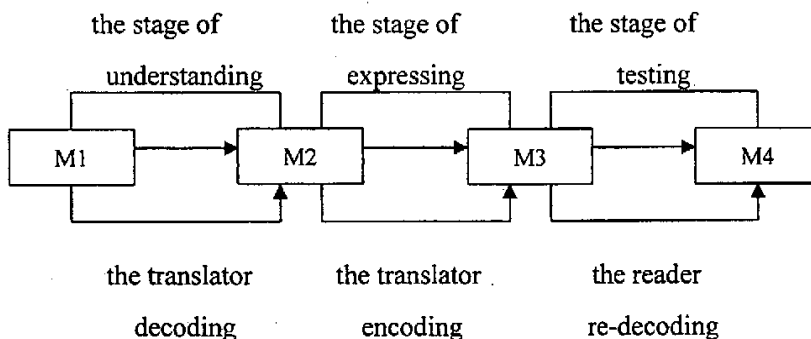


Figure3: the process of translation

Note: M1 refers to the message at the SL text. M2, M3 and M4 refer to the messages conveyed at the three different stages of translation respectively.

At the first stage of translation, the translator reads and decodes messages in the SL text. Thus transmission of message is mainly influenced and restrained by SL cultural context. At the second and third stages of translation, messages are encoded and decoded by making use of target language and accordingly may be under the control of TL cultural context. And at each stage, different participants with their personal cultural contexts are also involved, which influence the result of translation more or less. From this, we can generalize the classification of cultural context in terms of different stages and participants in the communicative process of translation:

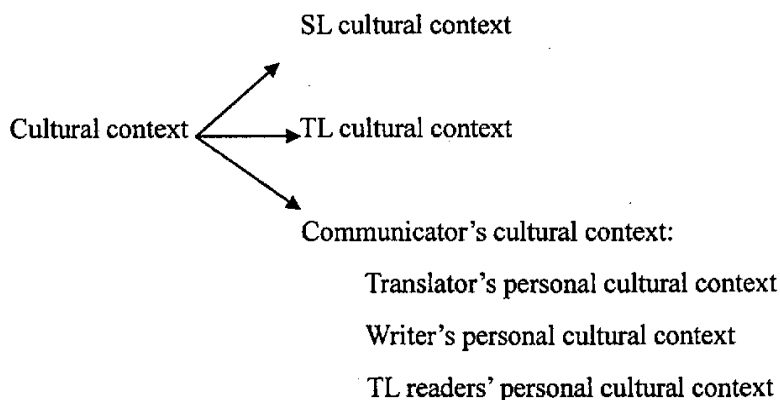


Figure 4: Classification of cultural context in translation

### 3.2.3 Internal and external cultural context in translating literary works

Literary works usually have an important share in translation. Characteristics of literary works decide the particularity of their cultural contexts involved in the process of



translation. Chen Zongming brought up fictitious context in his “language and logic expression” which gives enlightenment to literary translation. He argued that any literary work could be regarded as a possible world within which a complete set of contexts are called fictitious contexts. Therefore putting the text as a limit, cultural context within the text, or the fictitious cultural context of the whole work set by the author is called internal cultural context. Comparatively, cultural context existing outside the text is called external cultural context.

Internal cultural context includes all the cultural factors within the text. In fact, the literary text, no matter it is a novel, a play or a poetry, must be put in a special social cultural background and the events and characters created by the author in his work are always in a special cultural context too. To native readers, they share a common cultural background with the author so that they could easily understand the internal cultural context set by the author. Or in another word, they unconsciously make use of specific internal cultural context for their understanding of the text. However, to translators, consciously differentiating and analyzing the specific internal cultural context will be very important for them to better understand and translate the original text.

External cultural context includes the outer cultural factors which the literary work depends on, for example, the author’s individual cultural context. It is no doubt that the author’s way of thinking, values, aesthetic concept and moral code will actually influence the content and language of his work. Similarly, translators’ cultural context will influence his version in many aspects. So, for translators, they should pay attention to the author’s cultural context so as to better understand the SL text and try to avoid his own cultural prejudices in translating. Besides, the specific environments of time and space within which the original and translated text are created respectively will inevitably influence the language, genre and content etc. of the work and thus could also be fully considered by the translator too.

Up to now, three kinds of classifications of cultural context from different angles have been analyzed, which may not be complete enough yet. It should be noticed here that the three classifications are not opposite with each other but overlapping. In translation, different kinds of cultural contexts overlap, co-exist and mutually influence and restrict the process of translation continually. But how do they do? This will be the

next focus of this chapter.

### **3.3 Functions of cultural context in translation**

Functions of context have attracted a lot of attention. Chen Zhian and Wen Xu hold that restriction and interpretation are the two main functions of context. Liu Kezhang points out that the functions of context are to restrict word meaning and influence the way of expression (Liu Kezhang, 1990). 西植光正 claims that context performs eight functions, namely, absolute function, restrictive function, interpretive function, design function, filter and remedial function, generative function, transforming function and acquisitive function (西植光正, 1991). Pu Kan and Pang Weiqun talks about functions of context from four aspects: restriction, interpretation, judgment and generation (Pu Kan, Pang Weiqun, 1990). Pei Wen deems that cultural context mainly possesses three functions: absolute function which is determined by the supposition that cultural context is pervasive, restrictive function which restrict all the language activities, and interpretative function which is determined by the restrictive function of cultural context (Pei Wen, 2000).

Since this paper mainly talks about cultural context in translation, the author holds the view that functions of cultural context in translation are of two types: restrictive function and interpretative function. And at different stages of translation (translators, as the communicative mediator of translation, will mainly experience two stages, ie the understanding stage and the expressing stage of translation), cultural context will lay emphasis on different functions.

#### **3.3.1 Interpretative function of cultural context at the understanding stage of translation**

At the understanding stage of translation, translators' main task is to fully and correctly comprehend the original text which is set in some specific cultural context. To attain this aim, they should adequately and continually consider the SL cultural context whose interpretative function is a powerful help for them to better understand the original text. To some extent, we can say that in what degree translators know the SL cultural context could determine the degree of correctness of their understanding of the original text. The interpretative function of cultural context at this stage will mainly be reflected

in two aspects.

Firstly, it is contributive to translators' better understanding implications. According to H. D. Grice's cooperative principle, utterances in communication should be clear and obvious so as to ensure the flow and correct acceptance of information. But in real communications, this principle is usually violated because information is often influenced by certain contexts. For the same reason, languages of the SL text in certain cultural context may possess some special implications. To translators, being familiar with the SL cultural text will be very helpful for their correctly understanding the implications of the original text.

这熙凤携着黛玉的手，上下细细打量一回，便仍送至贾母身边坐下，因笑道：“天下真有这样标致的人儿！我今日才算看见了！况且这通身的气派竟不象老祖宗的外孙女儿，竟是嫡亲的孙女似的，怨不得老祖宗天天嘴里心里放不下，——只可怜我这妹妹这么命苦，怎么姑妈偏就去世了呢！”……(曹雪芹，《红楼梦》)

Version 1:

Xi-feng took Dai-yu the hand for a few moments and scrutinized her carefully from top to toe before conducting her back to seat beside Grandmother Jia.

“She’s a beauty, Granny dear! If hadn’t set eyes on her today, I shouldn’t have believed that such a beautiful creature could exist! And everything about her so distinguished! She does not take after your side of the family, Granny. She’s more like a Jia. I don’t blame you for having gone on about her during the past few days——but poor little thing! What a cruel fate to have lost Auntie like that!”...

—— by David Hawkes

Version 2:

His-feng took her hand and carefully inspected her from head to foot, then led her back to her seat by the Lady Dowager.

“Well,” She cried with a laugh, “this is the first time I’ve set eyes on such a ravishing beauty. Her whole air is so distinguished! She doesn’t take after her father, son-in-law of our Old Ancestress, but looks more like a Chia. No wonder our Old Ancestress couldn’t put you out of her mind and was for ever talking or thinking about you. But poor ill-fated little cousin, losing your mother so young!”

—— by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, quoted from “Cultural Context and Textual Translation” by Wu Yicheng, 1997.

From the underlined sentences in the two versions above, we can see clearly that Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang's understanding of Chinese cultural context is deeper than Hawkes, which results in a better version. For instance, “嫡亲” which means close paternal relations have some cultural implications in China. According to Chinese feudal tradition, paternal relations are closer than maternal relations. Therefore Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang translated this phrase as “She doesn't take after her father, son-in-law of our Ancestress”, which fully conveyed the implications of the original language and successfully reproduced a sophisticated and slick Xi-feng to Western readers, whereas Hawkes translated this part as “she doesn't take after your side of the family”, which is the result of his misunderstanding of traditional Chinese feudal family relations.

Secondly, it helps to remove ambiguity. Sometimes a same language form may have two or more than two interpretations. In this condition, certain cultural context may contribute to a correct judgment of the real meaning.

It seemed to him that life was but a trouble, at best, and he more than half envied Jimmy Hodges, so lately *released*. (Mark Twine. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*)

在他看来,人活着至多不过是一件麻烦事,他非常羡慕刚刚去世的吉姆·霍吉斯。(转引自 邓炎昌,刘润清,语言与文化)

In this sentence, the italic word “release” has many meanings in English. But if the translator is familiar with English cultural context, he may easily excluded irrelevant meanings and translates it as “去世” because in western cultural context, “release “ may refer to death euphemistically.

### 3.3.2 Restrictive function of cultural context at the expressing stage of translation

After well understanding the original text, translators' next task is to express it correctly in the target language. At this expressing stage, they will be restricted by the SL cultural context and the TL cultural context simultaneously. On the one hand, they should be faithful to the SL cultural context and try to avoid over-domestication. On the other hand, they should adequately consider the actual TL cultural context and the TL reader's acceptability and try to avoid over-foreignization. So, both the SL and TL cultural contexts will restrict the translator's choice of expression at this stage. And translators

have to make wise decisions according to the actual cultural context.

开展多元化服务。

- A. To develop Multi-orientation business.
- B. To diversify business.

At present, “多元化” has become a phrase with a high frequency in Chinese which is usually translated directly as “multi-...” But in some cases, it is not the only choice. Translators can deal with it flexibly according to the specific cultural context. For instance, version B is more concise, specific and easily to be accepted by TL readers than version A in the TL cultural context.

### **3.4 A brief sum-up**

In the preceding three sections of this chapter, relationships between translation and cultural context, classifications and functions of cultural context in translation were analyzed respectively. At the end of this chapter, a brief sum-up will be offered.

Firstly, the author raised that translation as a special kind of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic communication is always accompanied and influenced by certain cultural context without which correct understanding and appropriate expression of the SL text would be impossible. Putting it simply, there is a generally accepted viewpoint as “no context, no text.” We can also add that no cultural context, no translation.

Secondly, three kinds of classifications of cultural context in translation viewed from different perspectives were discussed in turn. From the angle of classification of culture, it can be classified into high, popular and deep cultural context. From the angle of different stages in translating process, cultural context can be classified into SL cultural context, TL cultural context and communicator’s cultural context. From the angle of literary translation, cultural context could be divided into two types: internal and external cultural contexts. It should be noticed that the three classifications are not opposite with each other but overlapping and mutually influence the process of translation.

Thirdly, two main functions of cultural context in translation were offered. At the understanding stage of translation, the interpretative function of cultural context is

brought into full play, which is mainly reflected in two aspects: the function of understanding implications and the function of removing ambiguity. At the expressing stage of translation, it is the restrictive function of both the SL and TL cultural contexts that contribute to the translator's appropriate choicission.

Through the preceding detailed analysis in this chapter, it could be seen clearly that cultural context in translation is very complicated and important and plays different roles at different stages of translation. So, as the communicative mediator of translation, translators have to face such an important problem as: how should they deal with the different cultural contexts involved in the process of translation so as to achieve the specific communicative task? In the forthcoming chapter, the author is going to discuss this problem from Jef Verschuren's theory of adaptation, a relatively new pragmatic angle, in the hope of finding out the models of adaptation of cultural context in translation.

## **Chapter 4 An introduction to Theory of Adaptation and its Enlightenment on Dealing with Cultural Context in Translation**

### **4.1 A review of both domestic and foreign contextual adaptation**

As a matter of fact, ideas of contextual adaptation have appeared in many scholar's works or speeches for a long time. For instance, Grice's cooperative principle is a principle showing mutual adaptations between linguistic communicators. Giles' accommodation theory explains two phenomena: convergence and divergence. The former means speakers choose a kind of language or linguistic variety to adapt to listeners' needs. The latter indicates that speakers do not consider listeners' needs or even deliberately use the language which is different from that of listeners for the purpose of showing their royalty to their social cultural community. Obviously, these two phenomena are two opposite attitudes of contextual adaptation. In other words, participants accommodate to others by adjusting their communicational behavior to the requisite roles that they are assigned in a given context. As Giles & Clair (1979: 17) note, "language is not a homogeneous, static system. It is multi-channeled, multi-variable and capable of vast modifications from context to context by the speaker, slight differences of which are often detected by listeners and afforded social significance."

In China, Hu Shi raised that people of different times produced utterances of that times too (Hu Shi, 1993). Zhao Yuanren has mentioned: "when people use language to communicate, their responsibility is to make an effective communication. The languages they used should always fit in with the relevant occasions"(Zhao Yuanren, 1985).

Feng Guangyi, on the basis of the former researches, published *Theory of Contextual Adaptation* in 1999, in which he analyzed the importance of contextual adaptation in linguistic communications from macro and micro angles respectively and further put forward four contextual adaptation rules. He argued: "in the process of using language, people are always restricted by or adapt to context consciously or unconsciously"(Feng Guangyi, 1999).

These above-mentioned researches show that it is really important to adapt to certain context in the process of communication. Jef Verschueren, Secretary General of

International Pragmatics Association (IPrA), atates a new idea that pragmatics is a perspective on language and advances theory of adaptation in his new work *Understanding Pragmatics* in 1999, which became a new model of understanding pragmatics and can offer some enlightenments of dealing with cultural context in translation too. Next, the author is going to introduce Verschueren's theory of adaptation in detail, which will be the main theoretical support of the forthcoming chapter of this thesis.

## **4.2 Introduction to Verschueren's theory of adaptation**

Before coming to the theory of adaptation, Verschueren's pragmatic perspective on language which is the base of understanding theory of adaptation should be spoken of at first.

In the pragmatic perspective, Verschueren argues that using language must consist of the continuous making of linguistic choices, consciously or unconsciously, for language-internal and/or language-external reasons. These choices can be situated at any level of linguistic form: phonetic/phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical, semantic (Verschueren, 1999:56). He further sums up seven features in making choice. Firstly, choices are indeed made at every possible level of structure, such as phonological, phonetic, word, sentence, grammatical and genre options. This choice-making does not have a linear ordering. And more often then not, choice-making at different levels is simultaneous. Secondly, language users do not only choose forms. They also choose strategies. And choosing a strategy may influence choosing required forms too. Thirdly, choices are made by language users in any degree of consciousness. Fourthly, choices are made both in producing and in interpreting an utterance, and both types of choice-making are of equal importance for the communication flow and the way in which meaning is generated. That means choice should be made by all the participants in real communication. Fifthly, language users have no freedom of choice. Once language is used, the user is under an obligation to make choices, no matter whether the range of possibilities can fully satisfy the communicative needs of the moment. Sixthly, choices are not equivalent because the specific way and strategy are often influenced by social cultural factors. Seventhly, choices evoke or carry along their alternatives.



Verschueren holds that it is the three features of language that make language users can make appropriate choices in the process of using language. They are variability, negotiability and adaptability which “are basic features of human language that can make people use language dynamically”(Yu Guodong, 2001). Variability “is the property of language which defines the range of possibilities from which choices can be made”. Negotiability is “the property of language responsible for the fact that choices are not made mechanically or according to strict rules or fixed form-function relationships, but rather on the basis of highly flexible principles and strategies”. It implies indeterminacy of various kinds. First of all, there is indeterminacy in the choice-making on the side of the language producer. Second, there is also indeterminacy of choice on the side of the interpreter. Third, indeterminacy is also involved because choices, once made, whether on the production or on the interpretation side, can be permanently renegotiated. If using language consists of the continuous making of linguistic choices from a wide and unstable range of variable possibilities in a manner which is not rule-governed, but driven by highly flexible principles and strategies, as well as permanently negotiable, it is only natural to ask how it is still possible then for language to be used successfully for purposes of communication. This is where the third key notion, adaptability, comes in. Adaptability “is the property of language which enables human beings to make negotiable linguistic choices from a variable range of possibilities in such a way as to approach points of satisfaction for communicative needs”(verschueren, 1999:59-61). The three notions are fundamentally inseparable. Among them, adaptability is placed “at the core of what is interesting about language use”. Whereas variability and negotiability are premises without which adaptability will lose content. Verschueren indicates it is the notion of adaptability that can be used as a starting point to define four angles investigation:

- Contextual correlates of adaptability, including any ingredient of the communicative context with which linguistic choices are inter-adaptable.
- Structural objects of adaptability, including structures at any layer or level of organization as well as principles of structuring.
- The dynamics of adaptability, the unfolding of adaptive processes in interaction.
- The salience of adaptation processes, the status of those processes in relation to the cognitive apparatus.

These four angles of investigation which should be seen as focal points in one coherent pragmatic approach to language use comprise the core part of Verschueren's theory of adaptation and accordingly need to be introduced in detail in the following part.

#### 4.2.1 Contextual correlates of adaptability

"Contextual correlates of adaptability means that making choices in the process of using language must adapt to communicative context" (He Ziran, Yu Guodong, 1999). Verschueren deems that language use is always situated against a complex background with which it is related in a variety of ways. He tries to represent the involved contextual components by the following figure:

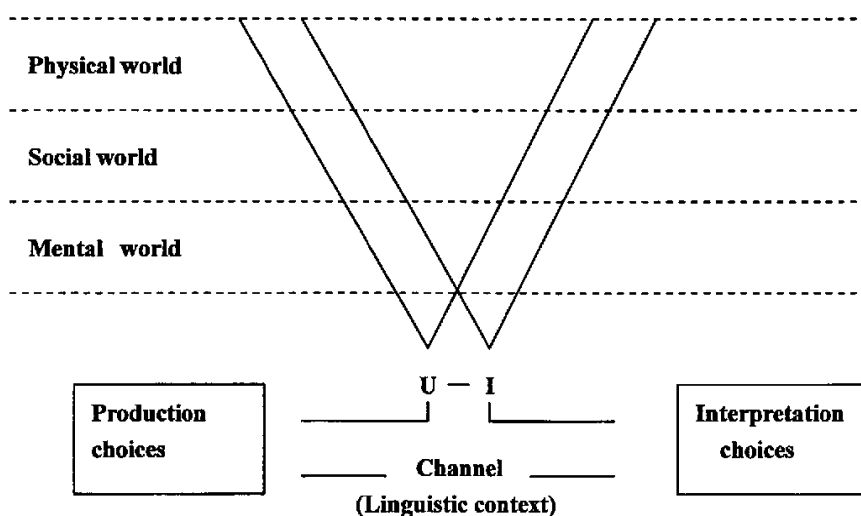


Figure 5: Contextual correlates of adaptability (1999:76)

As the figure shows, context is classified into two types: communicative context and linguistic context or linguistic channel.

Communicative context is a unity constituted of utterer (U), interpreter (I), physical world, social world and mental world, among which utterer and interpreter are presented as focal points because the contextual aspects of the physical, social, and mental worlds (which are not strictly to be separated either —hence the broken lines) do not usually start to play a role in language use until they have somehow been activated by the language users' cognitive processes. Therefore they are put at the bottom of the figure as key points linking linguistic channel and the variant communicative ingredients, which

fully show language users' key status too. In Verschueren's eyes, while the utterer makes production choices and the interpreter makes interpretation choices, they are not as simple as people thought. Utterers may have many voices. For instance, they can express their own ideas or, they can be virtual utterers who take the role of megaphone and spokesman. It is the same case with interpreters who may also play many different roles as addressees, side participants or even listener-in and eavesdroppers. Different types and numbers of interpreter will influence the utterer's making linguistic choices to some extent and let them consider or adjust their utterances. These researches show that Verschueren places same importance on both communicative sides and fully considers the interaction in the process of linguistic communication (Tan Xiaochen, 2002).

Mental world activated in language use contains cognitive and emotive elements, like personalities, emotions, believes, desires, wishes, motivations or intentions etc. Just as the utterance needs to interadapt with the utterer's mental world, the choices made are always adapted, whether tentatively or successfully, to the utterer's assessment of what the mental world of the interpreter(s) looks like. Thus judgments of the interpreter's personality traits, emotional involvement, patterns of beliefs, wishes and desires, motivations and intentions, may all enter the picture.

Social world includes the wide range of social factors that linguistic choices are interadaptable with. Most of the factors have to do with properties of social settings or institutions, within which many linguistic choices depend on relationships of dependence and authority, or power and solidarity, not only between utterer and/or interpreter and any third party which either figures in the topic of the discourse or is otherwise involved. In addition, social settings and institutions impose many types of principles and rules on the ways in which certain types of linguistic acts can be performed, or who has the right to perform them. In this sense, Phenomena of the utmost importance in the relationship between linguistic choices and the social world are the setting-, institution-, or community-specific communicative norms that have to be observed. Among those aspects in social world, culture, with its invocation of norms and values, has indeed been a favorite social-world correlate to linguistic choices in the pragmatic literature. In Verschueren's word, "Cultural' dimensions include the contrast between oral and literate societies, rural versus urban patterns of life, or a mainstream versus a sub-cultural

environment. Other social dimensions of variability with which linguistic choice-making is interadaptable include social class, ethnicity and race, nationality, linguistic group, religion, age, level of education, profession, kinship, gender, sexual preference, and so on” (Verschueren, 1999: 92). Culture is a very important factor, since language users are not idealized groups but live in a real world, all of their speech acts have to be limited by social and cultural rules. In a nutshell, Verschueren holds the view that the adaptability of language to the social world is truly pervasive.

When discussing the physical world, Verschueren mainly states two most important aspects: temporal reference and spatial reference. With regard to the temporal reference, Verschueren holds that “time” is a relative notion rather than an absolute value in relation to language. It contains event time, time of utterance and reference time. Like most aspects of the linguistic generation of meaning, temporal reference is usually characterized by a significant degree of indeterminacy. As to the spatial reference, just as there is reasonably precise reference to event time, it appears that there are indicators of absolute spatial relations. Examples would be dimensions such as North-South, East-West. However, spatial reference is usually relative to a perspective, which can be either utterer space or reference space. Thus spatial concepts require a perspective determined by spatial orientation of the utterer. But anything outside the utterer can be made into the deictic centre. For instance, *the silk store is near the cathedral*, exemplifies such use of relative reference space. In addition, Verschueren also indicates that relativity of temporal and spatial reference is primarily a function of the positioning of language users in the “world”. A lot of linguistic choice-making is dependent on properties of this positioning beyond those pure temporal and spatial terms. Thus, the utterer and interpreter’s position in the physical world as gestures, gaze, physical appearance, physical conditions even biological property can affect language choice in the aspect of physical world.

Linguistic channel, or linguistic context refers to the various linguistic means chosen in the process of language use according to the contextual elements. It includes three aspects: 1) cohesion which means to make the discourse semantically cohesive through conjunctions, anaphora, juxtaposition, exemplification, explanation, logical relations, ellipsis, numerals, highlighting, contrasting, comparison, repetition, substitution and structural iconicity etc.; 2) intertextuality which means that the discourse may be

influenced and restricted by its subject, genre and style etc.;3) sequencing which means sequences of utterances should be arranged according to logic and semantic relations when making linguistic choices.

Contextual correlate of adaptability is a key chain of linguistic adaptation. Contextual correlate of adaptation indicates that the choice of words has to adapt to context in the process of language use. Language users are supposed to pay heed to communicative context and linguistic context when making linguistic choices. However, context has not been set up before communication, yet dynamically exists in the process of language use. In Verschueren's eyes, Contexts are created by the dynamics of interaction between utterers and interpreters in relation to what is (or is thought to be) "out there" and will be renewed with the development of the communicative process.

#### **4.2.2 Structural objects of adaptability**

Structural objects of adaptability include "structures" in the strict sense (at various layers or levels of organization) as well as principles of "structuring". In detail, from Verschueren's point of view, "language use involves the making of choices:

- At the overarching structural levels of languages, codes (distinguishable variants of a language, involving sets of choices which are geographically, socially, functionally or situationally based), and style (variants of a language or code along dimensions of formality and informality);
- From the entire range of utterance-building ingredients (from sound structure, morphemes and words, clauses and sentences, to propositional structures and suprasentential units of various kinds);
- From the entire range of utterance and utterance cluster types;
- In accordance with utterance-building principles at the level of sentential and suprasentential utterance building as well as at the level of utterance clusters (guided mainly by strategies to establish and maintain coherence)" (Verschueren: 145-146);

Choice-making at different levels of structure and based on varying principles is always interdependent and interadaptable.

#### **4.2.3 Dynamics**

Dynamics of adaptability refers to the actual processes of (inter)adaptation, taking

into account the full power of variability and negotiability. It is regarded as the core of Verschueren's theory of adaptation because the above-mentioned contextual correlates of adaptability and structural objects of adaptability only provide us with the basic contents of adaptation which will be meaningful only when they are in the real process of interadaptability, or in other words, dynamic interadaptability.

Verschueren deems that generation of meaning is simply a dynamic process – the very core of what people do when using language. It is interactive, in the process of which linguistic choices interadapt to contextual correlates and structural objects. For instance, different contextual correlates can influence making linguistic choices and change the meaning of utterances, whereas different linguistic choices can influence changes in contexts too. He points out that the central task of a pragmatic analysis is to account for the dynamics of meaning generation. This dynamics can be 'located' in relation to three aspects: 1) the temporal dimension of language use (providing its raw material); 2) other contextual dimensions, such as social relationships; 3) structural properties of discourse. According to him, communicators will dynamically adapt to various contextual correlates and structural objects to make appropriate choices and finally generate meaning.

#### **4.2.4 Salience**

The process of language adaptation involves some cognitive psychological factors. That is the problem of salience. Mind in society is the basis of language user's adaptation and generation of meaning. All of the language choices can be explained from the aspects of society and cognition. The mental work of adaptation usually includes perception and representation, planning and memory. The process of adaptation which is governed by human mind in society can take place with different degrees of salience. In another word, the operation may be completely conscious or not conscious at all, with every shade in between.

### **4.3 Enlightenments from theory of adaptation to translation**

Theory of adaptation as a new pragmatic theory also offers some enlightenments to translation.

#### **4.3.1 Translation as a process of continuous making choices**

Theory of adaptation tells us that linguistic communication consists of continuous

making of linguistic choices, consciously or unconsciously, for language-internal and language-external reasons. Just like all the linguistic communicative activities, translation is also a process full of making choices, in which translators are always facing problems like selecting suitable understanding of SL text, TL words and sentence structure to translate, and translating tactics etc. Furthermore, "translation is not only a process of making choices in a common sense, but also a more complicated multi-layer process of making choices which involves switches between two languages or even among more languages, and accordingly possesses characteristics of making choices not only about using one language but also about translation itself"(Song Zhiping, 2004). In one word, Verschueren's idea of making choices is helpful to completely understand the nature and complicity of translation and offers us a good point of penetration to discuss it.

#### **4.3.2 Inevitable Contextual adaptation in translation**

As what has been mentioned above, translation is a process of making choices. As a matter of fact, making choices must be restricted by different contexts. In Verschueren's eyes, contexts are generated dynamically and will be renewed with the development of communicative process. Thus translators must continuously adapt to specific contexts in translation for the purpose of making appropriate choices. That is to say that only when translators fully consider the requirements of certain contextual factors, could a successful cross-cultural communication come true.

#### **4.3.3 Translator's key position in the process of translation**

In theory of adaptation, Verschueren lays great emphasis on language users. He firstly put forward a framework of contextual adaptation which has language users as its centre and definitely points out that without the utterer and interpreter and the functioning of their minds, there is no language use. It is necessary to indicate that Verschueren's such idea also fits well for written discourse in which the writer and the predicted reader interadapt to each other. In the process of translation, the special kind of communication, the translator plays the role of medium which links the SL text and the TL version simultaneously and naturally occupies the key position.

In the second classification of cultural context in chapter two, three stages in the process of translation are offered. But purely from the translator's angle, process of translation could be viewed as a unity of both the stage of expression and that of

interpretation. At each stage, different cultural contexts and participants must be involved more or less. For these reasons, the forth coming chapter will mainly discuss the model of cultural contextual adaptation in translation according to the second classification of cultural context, which in the author's eyes, must be useful for translator's better understanding the SL text and translating.



## Chapter 5 The Model of Cultural Contextual Adaptation in Translation

### 5.1 The Model of adaptation

The problem of cultural contextual adaptation is very complicated in practices. In fact, it's almost impossible to say clearly how to adapt to different cultural contexts in the specific process of translation, because there is no fixed schema about how to adapt. Translators have to make adaptations consciously, subconsciously or unconsciously according to specific communicative aims, actual conditions and changes in cultural contexts etc. In this chapter, the author just tries to discuss what cultural contexts may be adapted to at different stages of translation, thus the models of cultural contextual adaptation at different translating stages. Of course, in specific process of translation, adaptations to these cultural contexts may or may not be involved, which is beyond the topic of this thesis.

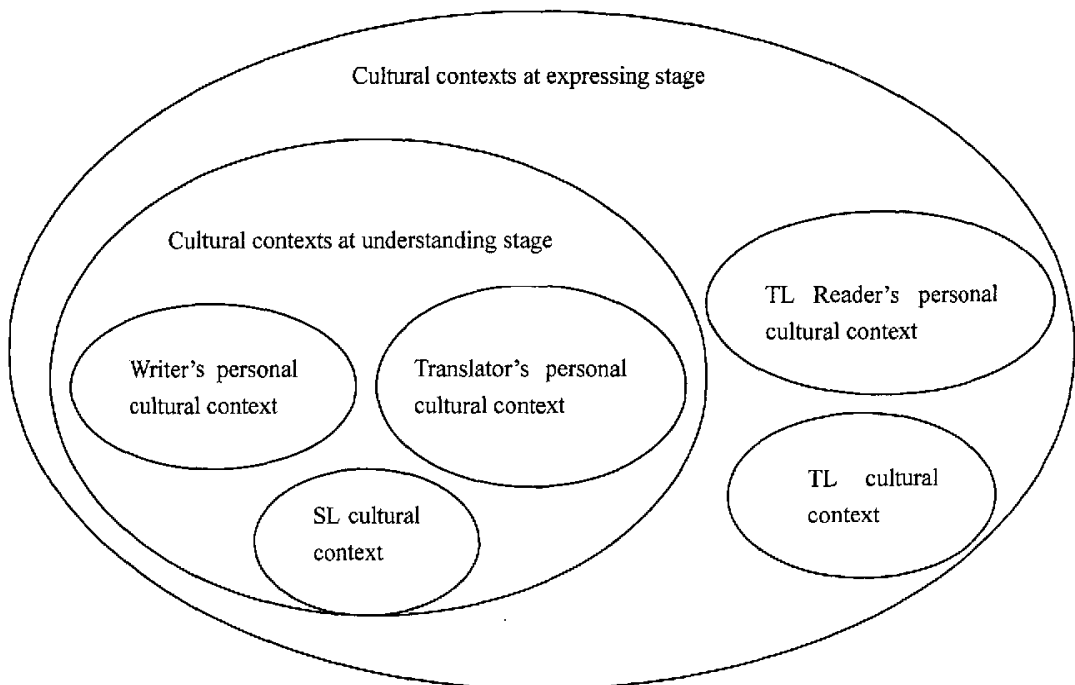


Figure 6: The model of cultural contextual adaptation in translation

Just as the second classification of cultural context in chapter two shows, cultural contexts in the communicative process of translation may be classified into: SL cultural context, TL cultural context, translator's personal cultural context, writer's personal cultural context and TL readers' personal cultural context, according to which models of cultural contextual adaptation at understanding and expressing stages of translation could be seen clearly from the above diagram.

In this diagram, we can see that at the expressing stage of translation, all the five cultural contexts may be adapted to by translators according to specific situation; whereas at the understanding stage of translation, writer's personal cultural context, translator's personal cultural context and SL cultural context could be adapted to.

### 5.1.1 Adaptation to SL cultural context

SL cultural context is one of the most important contexts in which the original text is deeply rooted. It consists of so abundant contents as time and space, value, way of thinking, geography, appreciation of the beauty, ethic idea and so on, which would be quite different from those of the TL cultural context. That is to say that if translators want to fully understand the SL text, they should firstly have adequate relevant knowledge of SL cultural context and adapt to them properly to correctly understand the cultural-specific parts of the SL text and efficiently avoid misunderstanding, imperfect understanding or literal understanding at the understanding stage of translation. Please look at the following example:

哭宣城善酿纪叟  
纪叟黄泉里，还应酿老春  
夜台无李白，沽酒与何人？

- Version 1: Vintner below Fountains Yellow,  
"Spring In Old Age," still do that vintage?  
Without Li Po there on Night's Plateau,  
Which people stop now at your wineshop?  
—— by Arthur Cooper, quoted from Xu Yuanhong:  
"Literary Translation: 1+1=3"
- Version 2: ELEGY ON MASTER BREWER JI OF XUANCHENG  
For thirsty souls are you still brewing  
Good wine of Old Spring, Master Ji?

In underworld are you not ruing

To lose a connoisseur like me?

—— quoted from Xu Yuanchong: “Literary Translation: 1+1=3”, 2003.

This Chinese poem by Li Bai, one of the most famous poets in Chinese history, seems very easy to translate, because its language looks quite simple and plain except for the three bolded phrases: “黄泉”, “夜台” and “老春” which load special Chinese historical cultural connotations and accordingly became the difficult and key points of correct understanding this poem. “黄泉” does not mean yellow fountain, but refers to the place where the dead were buried. “老春” actually is the name of the wine brewed by Master Ji rather than spring in old age whose meaning is almost ridiculous. “夜台” has nothing to do with night. Chinese people use this phrase to refer to grave euphemistically. From version 1, it can be easily found that Arthur Cooper does not really understand the real connotations of the three culture-specific Chinese phrases and thus makes a wrong translation which may give TL readers a complete wrong impression that Li Bai is talking to a person who is still alive, whereas the second translator perfectly adapts to the SL cultural context and fully master the cultural connotations of the three phrases. Therefore, version 2 correctly conveyed the meaning of the SL poem. In fact, it is very common to use culture-loaded images in Chinese poetry. If translators fail to adapt to them, misunderstanding would be inevitable. There is another example in Du Fu’s poem “月夜忆舍弟”: “露从今夜白, 月是故乡明。” Herbert Allen Giles translated them as: “The crystal dew is glittering at my feet./The moon sheds, as of old, her silver light.” (Lu Shuxiang, 1980) Obviously, he does not really understand the specific Chinese cultural context, in which the moon is usually used by poets to express their feeling of homesickness. Therefore, he omits the words like “今夜” and “故乡” in his version and loses the relationships between the moon and the poet’s strong homesick feelings too, which is the key tone of this poem.

Similarly, there are also a lot of examples in English-Chinese translation. The English movie “The First Blood” was translated as “第一滴血” in Chinese. In fact, it is quite wrong, because the title is a culture-loaded idiom whose real meaning is the first success in contest. For the same reason, “I am dead-beat today” does not mean “我被打

成重伤”，but indicates being completely tired. The idiom “to eat one’s words” also does not equal to “食言”，but “承认自己说错话” and so like. These examples fully show that adaptation to SL cultural context is crucial for translators to accomplish their tasks of understanding the SL text at the understanding stage of translation.

Besides, at the expressing stage of translation, adaptation to SL cultural context is very useful. For instance, for the purpose of introducing SL culture to TL readers, enriching and developing TL expressions or introducing new words into TL, translators may take great pains to adapt to the specific SL cultural context in translation. Such successful versions could be found everywhere:

叫一声“请”，一齐举箸，却如风卷残云一般，早去了一半。看那周先生时，一箸也不曾下。

Version: At the signal to begin, they fell to with their chopsticks, like a whirlwind scattering wisps of cloud. And half the food had gone before they noticed that Chou Chin had not eaten a bite.

“不要走了你的时了！你自己只觉得中了一个相公，就‘癞蛤蟆想吃起天鹅肉’来！”

Version: “Don’t be a fool!” he roared. “Just passing one examination has turned your head completely—you’re like a toad trying to swallow a swan!”

……忙忙如丧家之狗，急急如漏网之鱼，连夜找路回省城去了。

Version: …stealthily as stray dogs, swiftly as fish escaping from the net, fled back to provincial capital.

周进听了这，自己想：“‘瘫子掉在井里——捞起来也是坐’，有甚亏负我？”

Version: “Even if a paralytic falls into a well, he can be no worse off than before,” thought Chou Chin. “It can’t hurt me to go.”

These four examples are all chosen from the famous Chinese novel *The Scholars* translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang (Li Guolin, 2000). The Chinese idioms and

common sayings in each sentence are very vivid and easy to be accepted by TL readers and thus were successfully translated directly into English. Suppose “如风卷残云一般” is translated as “to eat quickly” and “癞蛤蟆想吃天鹅肉” as “to do what is impossible”, TL readers would not enjoy the vividness of the SL culture at all.

In another case, culture-specific expressions are so deeply rooted in the SL culture that they are meaningless out of the cultural setting, such as terms derived from philosophical, religious, medicinal and athletic traditions as “阴阳”, “五行”, “太极拳” in China and Holy Communion, forbidden fruit and olive branch in English and etc. In these cases, translators have to adapt to the SL cultural context and try to transliterate them because there are not any equivalents in the target language and TL readers have to accept the transliterated terms in order to gain insight into TL culture. Up to now, such English expressions as “to put the chestnut out of the fire”(火中取栗), “armed to teeth” (武装到牙齿) and “cold war” (冷战) have merged into Chinese. And similarly, Chinese expressions as kong fu film (功夫片) and qi gong (气功) etc. are also familiar to most English readers too. These contributions are partly achieved by translator’s adaptation to SL cultural context.

It still needs to be noticed that at the expressing stage of translation, translators usually make use of literal translation or transliteration to accomplish their tasks of adapting to the SL culture context. But sometimes expressions directly translated from source language are too rare to be accepted by TL readers. In these cases, translators may adopt literal translation with notes to adapt to the SL cultural context as well as to fully keep the original cultural connotations in their versions.

“此间与amp;世绝远，虽非武陵，亦差不多。……”（吴敬梓：《儒林外史》）

Version: “ We are completely cut off from the world here,” said Zhuang.  
“Although this is not Peach Blossom Stream\*, it comes very close to it.”

\*This was a fairy land described by the poet Tao Yuanming. A fisherman came here by accident; but though he marked the path by which he left, neither he nor others could find the way back again.

—— translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang

“武陵” is the name of a region in Hunan province with another name “桃花源”

from Tao Yuanming's famous prose "桃花源记". This name and its cultural connotation are very familiar to Chinese readers, but not easy to be understood by English readers. Therefore the translator uses the method of making notes to transfer the necessary cultural background information.

### 5.1.2 Adaptation to writer's personal cultural context

SL writer is the creator of the SL text, whose personal cultural context like appreciation of beauty, ideology, value, linguistic prejudice and even interests may naturally penetrate into or be represented in his or her works. From the angle of theory of adaptation, the writer as one of the participants in communication should have certain implicit conversation with the translator, through which the latter may master and adapt to the former's personal cultural context so as to better understand the SL text and correctly express it. That is to say the writer's personal cultural context may be adapted to both at understanding stage and at expressing stage of translation.

At the understanding stage, for instance, when we read Byron's poems "Cain", "Song for the Luddites" or "The Isles of Greece", we would consciously or unconsciously call to mind that he has a strong political passion for liberty and an intense hatred for all tyrants. Accordingly, we would adapt to his political idea and better grasp the subject of his poems. Another typical example is about Mao Zedong. As a great leader, an outstanding military commander as well as a master of words, Mao's enormous breadth of mind, unbounded aspiration and his dauntless daring are commonly recognized. And these characteristics are also well embodied in his poems too. Just as Mr Gu Zhengkun says, "each piece finished is believed to be a window into his personality, an insight into his whole being, a mouthpiece of his spirit and soul" (Gu Zhengkun: 2003). Translators who are familiar with this political giant's specific cultural context, could more deeply appreciate the essence of his poems. Here are lines from his much quoted "Snow":

#### 沁园春·雪（节选）

北国风光，  
千里冰封，  
万里雪飘。  
看长城内外，

唯余莽莽，  
大河上下，  
顿失滔滔。  
山舞银蛇，  
原驰蜡象。  
欲与天公试比高……

What a wonderful picture painted by Mao! The endless earth, the unbounded sky, the great wall, the big river, the dancing mountains and boundless highlands, all are submerged in an expanse of whiteness—snow and ice. But the poet is not merely describing landscape here. In light of his high political aspiration, translators should pay more attention to these words: “大河”, “山”, which are usually metonymies for political power in Chinese, and the line “欲与天公试比高”, a possible allusion to strives of state power and thus get the idea that the poet is implicitly showing a grant picture of struggles among political powers, or the so-called “heroes” in Chinese history, on the basis of which, the poet would deeply describe his own aspiration.

From the above analysis, we can make such a conclusion that when translators are very familiar with SL writer’s personal cultural context and try to adapt to it, they may more easily touch the deep meaning of the SL text through the surface meaning. It is the same case with the expressing stage of translation, in which translators may also adapt to SL writer’s personal cultural context for the purpose of achieving the equal artistic effect as the SL text. The following version rendered by Gu Zhengkun of those lines quoted above is a good example of showing the same magnificence as the original poem, which may be a result of adapting to Mao’s personal characteristics:

A thousand li of the earth is ice-clad a ground,  
Ten thousand li of the sky is snow-bound.  
Behold! At both sides of the Great Wall  
An expanse of whiteness conquers all;  
In the Yellow River, up and down,  
The surging waves are gone!  
Like wax elephants the highlands bounce,  
All try to be higher than heaven even once!

— by Gu Zhengkun, *China and West: Comparative*

*Poetics and Translatology*, 2003.

### 5.1.3 Adaptation to translator's personal cultural context

Translators, as readers of SL text and writers of TL version, are the most important participants in the communicative process of translation. They do not live in a cultural vacuum but are social and cultural beings. Therefore, to some extent their personal cultural contexts may influence or determine their understanding of the SL text, making linguistic choices of TL version and adopting various translating strategies. In other words, translators may adapt to their own personal cultural context at both the understanding stage and at expressing stage of translation consciously or unconsciously. Please look at the following two examples chosen from *A Dream of Red Mansions*:

虽才干优长，未免贪酷；且恃才侮上，那同寅皆侧目而视。

——曹雪芹，高鹗：《红楼梦》

Version1: But although a capable administrator Yu-tsun was grasping and ruthless, while his arrogance and insolence to his superiors made them view him with disfavor.

—— translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang

Version 2: But although his intelligence and ability were outstanding, these qualities were unfortunately offset by a certain cupidity and harshness and a tendency to use his intelligence in order to outwit his superiors; all of which caused his fellow-officials to cast envious glances in his direction.

—— translated by Hawkes

“蓉哥儿，你别在焦大跟前使主子性儿。别说你这样儿的，就是你爹、你爷爷，也不敢和焦大挺腰子！……不和我说别的还可，若再说别的，咱们红刀子进去白刀子出来！”

——曹雪芹，高鹗：《红楼梦》

Version1: Don't try to lord it over Chiao Ta, young Brother Jung! Not to speak of the like of you, not even your dad or granddad dare stand up to Chiao Ta... Shut up, and I'll overlook it. Say one word more, and I'll bury a white blade in you and pull it out red!

—— translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang



Version 2: Oh ho! Little Rong, is it? Don't you come the Big Master stuff with me, sonny boy! Never mind a little bit of a kid like you, even your daddy and your granddaddy don't dare to try any funny stuff with Old Jiao... You'd better watch out. Because if you don't, you're going to get a shiny white knife inside you, and it's going to come out red!

—— translated by Hawkes

The first example describes Jia Yucun whose character is different in Yang's version from that in Hawkes's. In Yang's version, he deliberately chooses expressions like "arrogance and insolence" for "侮" to highlight Yucun's negative character; whereas Hawkes uses the less derogatory word "harshness" for "酷" and the neutral expression "to use his intelligence in order to outwit his superiors" for "恃才侮上" to achieve the effect of weakening Yucun's defects. In addition, the original word "未免" is a neutral expression, but was translated as "unfortunately" in Hawkes' version which reveals the translator's regret and sympathy for Yucun. In the second example, Yang Xinyi and Gladys Yang's rendering is a bit too formal and serious, as the expressions of "stand up to" and "overlook" etc., which stresses Jiao da's positive image instead of a drunk. On the contrary, Hawkes regards Jiao Da as an amusing role and uses a lot of informal expressions as "sonny son" and "oh ho" etc. Yang and Hawkes' different expressing ways about Jia Yucun and Jiao da in their versions are due to their different personal cultural contexts. To go a step further, they hold different political standpoints. In Yang's eyes, Jia Yucun is a corrupt official who stands for exploiting class and therefore should be described as a negative figure; while Jiao Da is on behalf of the exploited class and his drunk words should be viewed as critics and resistance to the exploiting class. In contrast with Yang, Hawkes as an English man holds quite opposite class feelings to Jiao Da and Jia Yucun and accordingly creates different versions.

There is another good example which fully shows the influences caused by Yang and Hawkes' different personal cultural contexts on their versions:

贾琏道：“果这样也罢了。只是昨儿晚上，我不过是要改个样儿，你就扭手扭脚的。”

—— 曹雪芹，高鹗：《红楼梦》

“All right then,” he chuckled. “But why were you so uncooperative last night when all I wanted was to try something different?”

—— translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang

“Oh well, in that case all right,” said Jia Lian. “Just one thing, though” — he dropped his voice and smiled at her slyly— “Why did you keep pushing me off like that last night? I only wanted to try a change of position.”

—— translated by Hawkes

In this sentence, Jia Lian implicitly talks about sex. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang choose the expressions like “cooperate” and “to try something different” in his version, which is more implicit than the SL text because of their Chinese way of thinking and attitude toward appreciation of beauty. In contrast, Hawkes’ western way of thinking and appreciation of beauty makes him not only try to clarify “改个样儿” and “扭手扭脚” in his rendering by using the expressions “to try a change of position” and “pushing me off like that”, but also add “he dropped his voice and smiled at her slyly” to offering more obvious cues to TL readers (Zhang Nanfeng, 2004).

The above examples fully show that translators may be influenced by their personal cultural context at the understanding stage and at the expressing stage of translation, which may finally influence renderings more or less and to some extent, lead translators to make use of literal or free method in their translation. Therefore, translators should try their best to avoid their cultural prejudice consciously in translation and convey the original meaning faithfully.

#### **5.1.4 Adaptation to TL cultural context**

Just like the importance of SL cultural context at the understanding stage of translation, TL cultural context may also play a very important role at expressing stage of translation. Since “cultural deposits in source language messages are identified as either compatible or incompatible to the target culture” (Li Yunxing: 2000:186), messages with compatible cultural deposits can easily find their way into target cultures, almost intact. But messages with incompatible cultural deposits will not. When the SL cultural deposits are incompatible to the TL culture, translators may consider adapting to the TL cultural context for the purpose of achieving the equivalent effect and avoiding mistranslating in

the TL versions.

Usually, SL messages with incompatible cultural deposits can be further divided into two groups. Firstly, the cultural deposits are specific in source language. In another word, they do not have any cultural implications in target language.

她认为离开了办公大楼，离开了政工部门，就是离开了政治，听不到那些闲言碎语了，谁知是离开了咸菜缸又跳进了萝卜窖。

——蒋子龙：《赤橙黄绿青蓝紫》转引自：何自然： *Pragmatics and CE/EC Translation*

In the underlined sentence, “咸菜缸”and “萝卜窖”are culture-specific expressions in Chinese. And the intended meaning of the whole sentence has nothing to do with its literal interpretation but has the cultural implication of “from bad to worse”. If the translator translates it literally, TL readers can not grasp the correct meaning at all. Therefore, TL cultural context must be adapted to to avoid misunderstanding. Thus an English image should be substituted for that typical Chinese image, i.e. “jump out of the frying pan into the fire”. (He Ziran: 1992)

Religious belief usually has big influence on human’s verbal expressions. People in most occidental countries believe in Christianity. So a very strong Christian culture has come into being and exerted great effects on English. For instance, there are lots of culture-specific phrases derived from “The Bible” in English, such as “thirty pieces of silver”, “a kiss of death” and “olive leaf” etc. Similarly, Buddhism plays a major role in Chinese culture and contributes to the Chinese language many expressions, one of which being “三头六臂”(three heads and six arms). Please look at the following example:

谭招弟碰不得吗？你是三头六臂，我也敢碰。

——周而复：《上海的早晨》

Version: Is Tan Chao-ti some sacred being that no one dares to offend? But I dare, even if you’re a demigod!

—— translated by A.C.Barnes, quoted from Ke Ping: “Cultural Presuppositions and Misreading”, 2000.

The divine gods of Hinduism are characterized by more heads, arms and hands than mortal men. “Buddhism remolded Hindu gods and introduced two patterns of the shaping of god’s heads, arms, and hands, one being that of four hands and four eyes, the other being that of three heads and six arms. The latter has entered everyday speech as well as literary language”(Ke Ping: 2000:142). Just as the example shows us, “three heads and six arms” which means in Chinese superhuman wisdom and power as of Buddhist gods is not quite possible for the Western readers to understand if it is translated literally into English. So the translator adapted to the TL cultural context here by using another cultural word “demigod” to replace the culture-specific phrase “三头六臂”.

Besides, ethnological culture may also constrain one ethnic group’s verbal behavior and is the source of many culture-specific expressions. For example, the Chinese language possesses a great number of self-deprecating expressions: “鄙人”(my humble self), “寒舍”(my humble home), “贱内”(my humble wife), “老朽”(my old and useless self), etc.; contrary to these understatement of oneself, Chinese also tends to show profuse respect for others: “拜读”(read in awe), “大作”(your great article) etc. Li Yunxing argues that these terms come from a long feudal tradition of keeping a low profile and refraining from showiness (Li Yunxing, 2000). In such cases, translators can hardly expect English readers to respond with ease and comfort to a word-for-word translation of the Chinese terms just as the bracketed translations do. Therefore, they may adapt to the TL cultural context and translate these terms as “I” for “鄙人”, “my home” for “寒舍” and so forth.

Four-character phrase is a very striking kind of expression in Chinese, because it reveals the Chinese aesthetic view of upholding a pair of things and advocating the gorgeousness. Balance is usually carefully kept in these four-character phrases and the meaning is often repeated. For example, “年深月久” consists of two parts: “年深” and “月久”, whose meaning are very similar as a matter of fact. When facing these kinds of expressions, translators may adapt to the TL cultural context by only translating the meaning of one part to avoid redundancy, because in English cultural context, there’s no such kind of aesthetic tendency. On the contrary, English people who are deeply influenced by individualism are strongly against of “clichés” and admire simplicity.

Secondly, SL messages with cultural deposits may have quite different cultural

connotations in TL cultural context. Typical examples of this group are the names of many kinds of animals and plants which may have quite different or even opposite cultural connotations in SL and TL cultural contexts. For instance, “dragon” symbolizes the emperor in ancient China. Thus it got the relevant cultural connotations as being powerful, esteemed and auspicious. Reversely, in English, dragon is almost a synonym for “evil”. In many English legends, it is described as a terrible monster which can spurt flames. Owing to this, Westerners have quite opposite association of this dreadful image in contrast with what the Easterners have in mind. Therefore, when translating the Chinese idioms containing “dragon”, translators should try to select another word instead of “dragon” so as to adapt to the TL cultural context. Take “四小龙” for example, it is usually translated as “four tigers” to arouse a relevant equal image in TL reader’s mind.

At the end, there is still something that should be pointed out: for the purpose of adapting to the TL cultural context, translators usually tend to make use of free translation. In detail, they may use the method of modification and alteration just as what has been done in the example of four-character phrase above, and the method of replacement which could be found in examples of “三头六臂” and “四小龙” etc. in order to conform to target cultural norms and efficiently avoid misreading.

### **5.1.5 Adaptation to TL reader’s personal cultural context**

TL readers’ striking position in the process of translation has stirred up a lot of concern. Nida lays great emphasis on the response of the TL receptor. He argues in his famous work *the Theory and Practice of Translation*: “even the old question: Is this a correct translation? must be answered in terms of another question, namely: For whom? Correctness must be determined by the extent to which the average reader for which a translation is intended will be likely to understand it correctly”(Nida: 2004:1). Some scholars even hold that an effective communicative process of translation will be receptor-oriented. These arguments reflect TL readers’ importance in translation to some extent. In practice, the TL reader always keeps special sensitivity of their own culture. Therefore their personal cultural context is a very important aspect to determine their cultural acceptability and further influence their reading effects and accordingly needs to be fully considered by translators at the expressing stage of translation.

Here, Hawkes’s English rendering of *The Story of The Stone* will be taken as an

example. It is universally known that Hawkes tends to make use of the method of domestication and even adds extra details to his version in order to achieve greater dramatic and recreational effects. Hawkes's translating practice could be regarded as a result of adapting to his predicted TL reader's cultural context to some extent. He has admitted that one of his aims of translating this Chinese novel is just to let English readers share some joys with him. Please look at the following example:

“难道这也是个痴丫头，又像颦儿来葬花不成？”因又自笑道：“若真也葬花，可谓东施效颦了；不但不为新奇，而是更是可厌。”

——曹雪芹：《红楼梦》

Version: “Can this be some silly maid come here to bury flowers like Frowner!” he wondered. He was reminded of Zhuangzi's story of the beautiful Xi-shi's ugly neighbor whose endeavors to imitate the little frown that made Xi-shi captivating produced an aspect to hideous that people ran from her in terror. The recollection of it made him smile. “This is ‘imitating the frowner’ with a vengeance,” he thought, “—if that is really what she is doing. Not merely unoriginal, but downright disgusting!”

Hawkes's version is obviously longer than the original one here because he deliberately add some background information about the old Chinese idiom “东施效颦”. Needless to say, this is due to his consideration of the TL reader's personal cultural context and intension of adapting to it.

癞蛤蟆想天鹅吃。——曹雪芹：《红楼梦》

Version: A case of “the toad on the ground wanting to eat the goose in the sky.”

Literally, “天鹅” should be translated as “swan”. But Hawkes chooses “goose” to replace “swan” because he is familiar with English reader's esthetic cultural context, in which “swan” symbolize grace and lofty and could not be accepted as a kind of delicious food; whereas the word “goose” could.

For the purpose of adapting to TL readers' personal cultural context, translators usually adopt the method of free translation. But they may also select literal translation with note and literal translation with free translation or even literal translation according

to his judgment of the TL reader's cultural acceptability. For instance, when the future TL readers are ones who will study Chinese, the sentence “她有沉鱼落雁之容，闭月羞花之貌” can be literally translated as “her beauty would make the fish sink, the wild goose fall down and the moon hide herself, and put the flowers to shame” to meet their possible Chinese cultural context. Otherwise, it may be translated domestically as “Her beauty is beyond description” to avoid TL readers' unnecessary misreading.

## **5.2 Dynamic Adaptation to cultural context**

According to Verschueren's dynamic contextual view, the most essential feature of context is its dynamic generation. Context is not static, but is dynamically generated in linguistic communications. “It is both the outcome of communicative development and the start point of a further communication (Tan Xiaochen: 2002). It always develops and renews with the development of communication. In Verschueren's eyes, dynamic adaptation as the core of theory of adaptation refers to the process of interadaptation between dynamically generated contexts and the linguistic choices. In other words, dynamically generated context will unceasingly influence communicators, who will dynamically adapt to them and finally make proper linguistic choices in communication. And then, the linguistic choices will influence changes in context.

Since translation as a special kind of communication is also a process full of making choices, dynamic adaptation is inclined to be viewed as the core of the model of cultural contextual adaptation in this thesis. The author holds that in the special communicative process of translation, translators will be continuously influenced by dynamically generated cultural contexts. And for the purpose of achieving their different communicative aims at different stages of translation, they will dynamically adapt to different cultural contexts and finally make proper choices. In detail, just as figure 6 shows, at the understanding stage of translation, the translator plays the role of reader of the SL text and aims at correctly understanding the SL text. Therefore he may dynamically adapt to the corresponding combinations of the three cultural contexts at this stage so as to choose the correct meaning of the SL message. Similarly, at the expressing stage of translation, the translator plays the role of writer of the TL rendering and aims at creating an appropriate version. So, he may dynamically adapt to the corresponding

combinations of the five cultural contexts at this stage and finally makes proper TL choices. Of course, the final linguistic choices made by translators, or the generated TL rendering will go on prompting or influencing relevant cultural contexts when they are read by TL readers and arouse another turn of communication, which is not the focus of this research.

The view of dynamic adaptation to cultural context enlightens translating practice a lot. According to it, translators may make flexible adaptations for specific communicative aims and accomplish their communicative tasks. Please look at the following example:

Instrumental and orchestral music had for too long been the Cinderella of Welsh music.

In this sentence, the underlined word “Cinderella” has special cultural meaning in SL cultural context. It is the name of the character of “Girl with the Diamond Slipper” in *Grimm Tales*, which usually figuratively refers to beautiful poor girl, nameless beauty, housemaid, someone or something whose value is covered or people who become famous overnight.

At the understanding stage of translation, translators’ choice of meaning of “Cinderella” will be influenced by this SL cultural context and for the purpose of correctly understanding it, they should adapt to the related cultural context and choose the proper meaning of something whose value is covered as a correct understanding of the SL message.

At the expressing stage of translation, translators’ communicative aim turns into properly translating the SL text. But, with regard to the criterion of proper translating, they may have different ideas and thus the different specific translating aims. Consequently, although translators’ linguistic choice of this word may be influenced by many kinds of cultural contexts as the SL cultural context, TL cultural context and communicator’s personal cultural context, they may make dynamic adaptations according to their specific translating aims and finally get different linguistic choices. For example, if the translator wants to introduce the cultural image of Cinderella into Chinese,



he will adapt to the SL cultural context and directly translates the sentence as “ 在过去很长一段时间里，乐器和管弦乐在威尔士音乐中只能充当灰姑娘的角色”；if the translator wants to create a easily accepted rendering, he will adapt to the TL cultural context and translates the sentence as “ 在过去很长一段时间里，乐器和管弦乐在威尔士音乐中屡遭白眼”；if the translator wants to keep the SL cultural image and produce an easily accepted rendering simultaneously, he will adapt to both the SL cultural context and TL cultural context and translates the sentence as “在过去很长一段时间里，乐器和管弦乐在威尔士音乐中屡遭白眼，充当着灰姑娘的角色”。

Researches on dynamic adaptation to cultural context offer us the reason that the same SL text may have quite different renderings which may be due to translator's adaptation to different cultural contexts. Therefore, in the communicative process of translation, translators should consciously and dynamically adapt to various cultural contexts in light of their specific communicative aims at different stages of translation and accordingly produce a better rendering.

## Chapter 6 Conclusion

Translation which involves switches between two languages as well as two cultures is viewed as a special kind of cross-cultural communication. Accordingly, the influence of cultural context on translation is becoming more predominant than before and is worthy of a deep and thorough study.

The present thesis systematically discusses the classifications and possible functions of cultural context in translation. Since cultural context involved in the process of translation consists of different layers viewing from diverse angles, classifications of cultural context in this thesis are discussed in several perspectives instead of one. Complicated cultural context involved in translation always plays a very important role in translation. Its different functions at different stages of translation are also offered in this thesis.

On the basis of a full discussion of cultural context in translation, the thesis introduces Jef Verschueren's theory of adaptation for the purpose of further exploring the dynamic model of cultural contextual adaptation in translation.

### 6.1 Summary of major findings of this thesis

Firstly, in light of the diversity, complicity and importance of cultural contexts in the communicative process of translation, detailed classifications of cultural context in translation are discussed from three angles: high, popular and deep cultural context from the angle of classification of culture; SL cultural context, TL cultural context and communicator's cultural context from the angle of different stages in translating process; internal and external cultural context from the angle of literary translation. It is also argued that the three classifications are not opposite with each other but overlapping and mutually influence the process of translation. Besides, two main functions of cultural context in translation are discussed too: the interpretative function of cultural context which is mainly reflected in two aspects: the function of understanding implications and the function of removing ambiguity at the understanding stage of translation; the restrictive function of both the SL and TL cultural contexts at the expressing stage of translation.

Secondly, guided by Jef Verschueren's theory of adaptation, the author mainly analyzes the model of cultural contextual adaptation in translation which aims at solving

the problem of what cultural context possibly influencing the translator's understanding of the SL text and translating and possibly being adapted at different stages of translation. According to this model, SL cultural context, the SL writer's personal cultural context and the translator's personal cultural context may be adapted to at the understanding stage of translation. At the expressing stage of translation, besides the three kinds of cultural contexts, TL cultural context and TL reader's personal cultural context may also exert influences on translator's activity and finally may be adapted to.

Thirdly, dynamic adaptation is viewed as the core of theory of adaptation. Cultural contextual adaptation in translation should also be regarded as a dynamic process. Translators may dynamically adapt to different cultural contexts in terms of their various status and communicative aims at different stages of translation to achieve their different communicative tasks.

## **6.2 Limitations of current research and recommendations for future research**

This thesis lays great emphasis on discussing cultural contexts possibly being adapted to at different stages of translation for the purpose of achieving different communicative tasks. As for how to adapt, researches on using appropriate translating strategies to fulfill different tasks of adaptation are far from enough. As a matter of fact, Verschueren holds the view that the process of dynamic adaptation is always with the help of strategies. Therefore, a detailed future research on how to choose proper translating strategies to adapt to different cultural contexts at different stages of translation will be very necessary and meaningful.

Besides, the exploration of classifications and functions of cultural contexts in translation and model of cultural contextual adaptation in translation are just the author's initial attempts in this field and need to be further proved, modified and supplemented in the future study.

Lastly, although the author repeatedly points out the importance of dynamics in the process of cultural contextual adaptation, it is still in a general description and should be analyzed in more details in future researches.

Generally speaking, researches on cultural contextual adaptation in translation from

the perspective of theory of adaptation are relatively new and thus offer a large space for further studies. This thesis is hoped to serve as a starting point for more researches in this important area.

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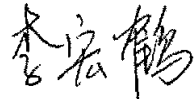
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