Relevance Theory-Based Research on Translation of Kinship Terms from Chinese into English

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Abstract:

Because of the differences between Chinese and English kinship systems, the connotation and the usage of Chinese and English kinship terms are quite different. Relatively speaking, Chinese kinship terms are more complex than the English ones and have more socialized usage. When doing the translation, the translator should first deal with the codes according to the source text writer's intention and target text reader's cognitive environment and enable target text readers to find the optimal relevance between the translated text and the context. The translator should first get a true understanding of the contextual effect of the source text according to the inference on the ostensive behavior of the source text writer and try to transfer the original intention of the author to the target reader and give them conveniences to make the right assumptions. As to the translation of kinship terms, the translator should first find out the intention of the author to use the term and meanwhile think about the ability of acceptance of the target reader. By considering the entire relevant elements, the translator should find the optimal relevant term.

Keywords:

Relevance Theory, Kinship Terms, Cultural Default, Translation Equivalence

1. Introduction

When people are involved in the communication process, they do more than just to understand the speaker's thoughts and feelings. People are using language in subtle ways to define their relationship to each other, to identify themselves as part of a social group and to establish the kind of speech event they are in, which we call the second function of language. This second function is clearly highlighted in terms of address, which is defined by Ralph Fasold (2000) as "the words speakers use to designate the person they are talking to while they are talking to them." As an important part of address terms, kinship terms share the same function. Both the Chinese and English languages contain a great number of kinship terms. However, because of the difference of cultural background between Chinese and English, the connotation and the usage of kinship terms in the source language do not necessarily

coincide with those in the target language, thus forming the cultural default in the translation of kinship terms.

Many scholars have spared no effort to solve this problem. The scientific study of kinship terms began with the publication of Lewis Henry Morgan's System of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family, published in 1870. Morgan has amassed a huge amount of data on kinship terminology to work out a classification of kinship systems. Morgan has assumed that human society has evolved through a series of stages from · primitive savagery to civilization and he sees kinship terminologies as reflecting these stages. Primitive promiscuity, for example, is signaled by a Hawaiian type of kinship nomenclature. Morgan has made two major distinctions between kinship terms：classificatory terms, which subsume a relatively large number of biological kin types and descriptive terms, which subsume a relatively small number of types, preferably having unique referents. He has imposed this scheme on whole terminological systems. He has then fitted the typological scheme to his evolutionary framework, where he points out those primitive systems are classificatory, whereas civilized systems are descriptive. He has ignored the problem of how to analyze degrees of extension, and how to discover the semantic criteria by which people make distinctions between kindred terms. And later in 1929, Kroeber suggested eight categories: generation, affinity, collaterality, gender of relative, bifurcation, relative age, gender of speaker and decadence. He has examined these differences to distinguish kinship terms. This kind of distinction is important because it first destroys the notion of a simple classification of kinship terminologies and suggests a way of dealing with the mass of kinship terms from different groups.

The study of kinship terms in China can be dated back to the year when Shi Qin of Er Ya, (《尔雅 释亲》) was finished and the famous scholar Liang Zhangju gave a general description of the ancient Chinese kinship terms in his great work The Collection of Kinship Terms (1992). In modem times, scholars like Zhao Yuanren, Lu Shuxiang and Jiang Lansheng have made detailed studies of the kinship term systems.

As for the translation of kinship terms, many scholars have analyzed this phenomenon under the framework of culture and functionalism. Professor Bao Huinan devotes one chapter to the translation of kinship terms in his work Cultural Context and Translation (2001), in which he has studied the differences between Chinese and English kinship terms and explained some strategies in translation. Others have tackled the translation of kinship terms according to their functions. These theories have solved certain problems in the translation of kinship terms to some extent. For instance, we should omit the kinship terms when translating them into another language and we should make conversions if the literal translation causes failures in communication.

These former studies of the translation of kinship terms are quite fruitful. It gives a new perspective to translation because in the last forty years, most of the studies of kinship terms are static and descriptive and few of them are dynamic ones. Functionalism focuses on pragmatic studies and pragmatic features of kinship terms and puts more emphasis on communication. It can solve many problems caused by cultural differences. However, some scholars criticize that translation from the perspective of functionalism sometimes goes to another extreme when they just pursue the equivalence of function and ignore the art of language.

As a theory based on communication, relevance theory (RT) prefers to consider all the relevant elements in translation and find the most suitable words or expressions, it tends to reach a kind of balance. Therefore, relevance theory can explain the phenomenon of translation macroscopically. This paper will try to prove that relevance theory can give a new approach to the translation of kinship terms in the following parts.

1.1. Objective of the Research

This paper will investigate the translation of kinship terms as a whole system from the perspective of RT, which was proposed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson in their Relevance: Communication and Cognition (2001). RT has opened new perspectives for the research of modern pragmatics and modem communication theories and it has a great influence on many other research areas including cognitive science, linguistics, and language philosophy and translation studies. Moreover, it provides a unified theoretical framework for translation. In this paper, a group of Chinese kinship terms and their English versions will be applied. The purpose of using them is to explain what kind of strategy should be used in a dynamic context and in what sense a translation can be regarded as faithful from the perspective of RT. This paper will also testify that RT subsumes more inclusive explanations of the translation phenomenon in kinship terms.

1.2. Significance and Necessity of the Research

The study of the translation of kinship terms from the perspective of RT is of both theoretical and practical significance. As for RT, since the day it first appeared in the publication of Relevance: Communication and Cognition in 1986, it has received both praise and criticism. Although some scholars say that it lacks scientific methods, it still gives a new perspective for translation because it regards translation as a dynamic process. The study of the translation of the kinship terms also has practical significances. Kinship terms are a part of address terms. Nowadays, address terms have formed a complete system although the scholars in linguistics are now of different opinions as to whether the Chinese lexical words of address form an independent system. The study of kinship terms can help to make clear the inner relationship of kinship terms which have a close relationship with the comprehension of a context. It can also help us to explore the dynamic contact between culture, profession, age and other social elements. Using kinship terms is an important social behavior and it is necessary for us to use the proper type of kinship terms in proper situations whether the communication happens within a culture or cross-culturally.

2. Literature Review

There are some research achievements on Chinese and English kinship terms as well as their translation.

2.1. Previous Studies on Kinship Terms

The way we address people is a matter of great importance in most cultures. The addressing terms are the ones used to show the relationships between people or to distinguish their identity, social status and career. Ralph Fasold defines address the terms in the Sociolinguistics of Language as "the words speakers use to designate the person they are talking to while they are talking to them. According to Li Jiayuan,

appellations are words that people have acquired owing to their kinship and other relationships and not all appellations can be used as face-to-face address terms. Appellations are generally divided into kinship and non-kinship appellations. Most appellations arc comparatively stable. but they do change slowly with the passage of time and vary with the speakers' geographical positions，ages and status. Chinese and English kinship appellations are similar in their basic terms, but the Chinese make much clearer distinctions in the above-mentioned aspects. Moreover, many Chinese kinship appellations can be extended to address non-relatives, which is rare in English. (Li 2007)

According to Zhang Aiqun, address terms are all indispensable part of people's daily life and literary works. Owning to different languages, cultural backgrounds and social structures, there are pronounced distinctions between English and Chinese address terms. Chinese address terms are descriptive. They can indicate the addressee's gender, age and consanguinity clearly. The address terms in English are classificatory. They are general. Kinship is one of the complex systems of culture. All human groups have a kinship terminology which is defined as a set of terms used to refer to kin. Kinship can have an influence on many fields in our life. (Zhang 2007)

2.2. Previous Studies on the Translation of Kinship Terms

Translation is an activity involving usually two languages and two national cultures. Conditioned by the strikingly multiplied dimensions of the worldwide cultural exchanges in recent years, the focus of contemporary translation studies has gradually shifted to the culture-related contemplation on translation practice. So the cultural translations are given more attentions now.

According to Li Jiayuan, only in taking cultural differences into account and adopting a comprehensive view toward translation activities can a translator avoid making mistakes and achieve successful communication when translating appellations as a cultural mediator who spans two languages and two cultures. (Li 2007) And in the opinion of another translator Zhai Ying, English and Chinese languages are different not only at the linguistic level but also at the cultural level. Without the awareness, translators give liable to fall into the "cultural traps" in translation. (Zhai 2003) Therefore, translators and translation researchers should pay enough attention to the effective transmission of Chinese cultural values.

2.3. Application of Relevance Theory to Translation

According to Zhang Aiqun (2007), relevance theory is the most influential pragmatic theory in western countries these years. The key point of the relevance theory is cognition and communication. It focuses on the effect that the cognitive context has on the inference of the communicator's communication intention. It claims that the nature of communication is ostensive-inferential process. In relevance theory, context is a set of psychological constructs, a subset of the reader's assumptions about the world. Context is not given but chosen. In the process of the reader's inference, the reader chooses those more manifest or accessible contexts.

Relevance theory considers translation as an ostensive-inferential process. It explains the intention of the author and the cognitive environment of the target reader and the strategy taken by the translator reasonably. Translation is regarded as an inter lingual communication which includes two rounds of communications. The translator

connected the source writer and the target reader by acting as both the communicator and the audience. In the first round, a translator functioned as the audience. He tries to get the right intention of the source writer. In the second round, he acts as the communicator who interpreted the source writer's intention to the target reader through proper translations. (Zhang 2007)

According to Wu Xingmei, while evaluating the translation of an address term, no matter what kind of term it is，we should see whether it communicates the intention of the original term and whether it costs unnecessary processing effort. While translating an address term, a translator is supposed to make the intention of the source writer meet the expectation of the target readers. He firmly recognizes the source writer's intention of the use of the term, assess the cognitive context and the expectation of the target reader, and finally express his interpretation of the source writer's intention in appropriate translation, which should not take unnecessary processing effort. (Wu 2006)

Kinship terms are a part of address terms. Nowadays, address terms have formed a complete system although the scholars in linguistics are now of different opinions as to whether the Chinese lexical words of address form an independent system. The study of kinship terms can help to make clear the inner relationship of kinship terms which have a close relationship with the comprehension of a context. It can also help us to explore the dynamic contact between culture, profession, age and other social elements. Using kinship terms is an important social behavior and it is necessary for us to use the proper type of kinship terms in proper situations whether the communication happens within a culture or cross-culturally.

The research of translation of kinship terms has long been paid attention to by scholars from home and abroad. Relevance theory is the most influential pragmatic theory in the Western world these years. The key point of RT is cognition and communication. It focuses on the effect that the cognitive context has on the inference of the communicator's communication intention. It considers translation as an ostensive-inferential process and reasonably explains the questions such as the intention of the author, the cognitive environment of the target reader and the strategy taken by the translator. It can explain the translation phenomenon in a macro-level view.

3. An Overview of Kinship Terms

As has been mentioned in the previous part, the study of kinship terms is important to the study of cross-cultural communication and translation. However, up to now, the efforts made in the translation of kinship terms are quite limited. Before a theoretical study of translation of kinship terms, we will first give a definition of kinship terms．

3.1. Definition of Kinship Term

The way we address people is a matter of great importance in most cultures. The addressing terms are the ones used to show the relationships between people or to distinguish their identity, social status and career. Ralph Fasold defines address terms in the Sociolinguistics of Language as "the words speakers use to designate the person they are talking to while they are talking to them. In most languages, there are two main kinds of address terms: names and second-person pronouns." (Fasold 2000) Kinship is one of the complex systems of culture. All human groups have a kinship

terminology which is defined as a set of terms used to refer to kin. Kinship can have an influence on many fields in our life. For example, in most societies, kinships influence the things such as whom one calls and whom cannot marry, for whom one must show respect, whom one can joke with, and whom one can count on in a crisis. Kinship terms reflect the implied cultural connotation profoundly. The research on kinship terms shows that there are great differences existing between different cultures, especially between Western culture and Chinese culture.

3.2. Kinship Terminology

Kinship terminology refers to the words used in a specific culture to describe a specific system of familial relationships. They include the address terms used in different languages or communities for different relatives and the terms of reference used to identify the relationship of these relatives to ego or to each other. In the Introduction part we have mentioned that Morgan has made two major distinctions between kinds of kinship terms: classificatory terms, which subsume a relatively large number of biological kin types and descriptive terms, which subsume a relatively small number of types. And the Chinese kinship terms belong to descriptive terms while the English kinship terms belong to classificatory terms.

As a system, the English kinship terminology mainly contains the following principal terms:

1) mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister

2) uncle, aunt, nephew, niece

3) cousin (differently elaborated in different English speaking cultures)

4) grandfather, grandmother, grandson, granddaughter

5) granduncle, grandaunt, grandniece, grandnephew (in many dialects)

6) great-grandmother, great-great-grandmother, and so on; great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather, and so on.

There are also the affinal terms: wife, husband, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, mother-in-law and father-in-law as well as uncle and aunt. On the other hand, he Chinese kinship terminology is a more complex system which we will discuss in detail in the following part.

3.3. Characteristics of Chinese Kinship Terminology

Before discussing the characteristics of Chinese kinship terminology, we must give a clear comparison between the major kinship terms in Chinese and English.

Table 1. A comparison of major Chinese and English kinship terms

Chinese	Relationship	English	Chinese	Relationship	English
奶奶	father's mother	grandmother	姑妈	sister of one's father	aunt
外婆	mother's mother	grandmother	姨妈	sister of one's mother	aunt
爷爷	father's father	grandfather	舅妈	brother of one's mother	aunt
外公	mother's farther	grandfather	婶婶	wife of the brother of one's father	aunt

爸爸	father	father	哥哥	elder brother	brother
妈妈	mother	mother	弟弟	younger brother	brother
伯伯	father's elder brother	uncle	姐姐	elder sister	sister
叔叔	father's younger brother	uncle	妹妹	younger sister	sister
舅舅	mother's brother	uncle	姐/妹夫	elder/younger sister's husband	brother-in-law
姑父	husband of the sister of one's father	uncle	弟媳	younger brother's husband	sister-in-law
姨夫	husband of the sister of one's mother	uncle	嫂嫂	elder brother's husband	sister-in-law
侄女	daughter of one's brother	niece	侄子	son of one's brother	nephew
外甥	daughter or son of one's sister	niece/nephew	女儿	daughter	daughter

From Table 1, we can clearly see that the Chinese terminology tends to be much more complex than their English counterpart. Chinese kinship terminology represents a kind of family-centered social relationship. In Chinese culture, the family is so important that there is a highly elaborate system of kinship terms to describe the relationship between the family members and the relatives. In ancient times, family members encountered each other frequently in daily life in China，therefore they had to have precise kinship terms to identify their identity. The Chinese kinship terms are a kind of descriptive terms with various forms and categories. In the process of history, it has evolved into a rigorous addressing system. The modem kinship terms have mainly inherited the nature of the old types which may have the following characteristics.

3.3.1 Seniority in the Family and the Clan

Traditionally, the Chinese kinship terminology has precise kinship terms to describe different generations, which not only reflect different generations but also the seniority of the same generation.

The Chinese kinship terminology has a strict hierarchy. The elder members of a family such as grandparents, parents, uncles and aunts can generally call family members of the younger generation by their first names, but not vise versa. This kind of phenomenon is also reflected in the age difference. The elder one of the brothers or sisters can directly call the first name of the younger ones but it is impolite for the younger ones to do so.

And among the same generation, the Chinese kinship terms also have special words to describe the different ranks. For example, one's three elder sisters must be addressed as dajie (大姐), erjie (二姐), and sanjie (三姐). And the three younger sisters must be addressed as damei (大妹), ermei (二妹), sanmei (三妹) or one can call the names of the younger sisters directly in face-to-face talks. However, in English kinship terms, no expressions such as the first elder sister (dajie), the second elder sister (erjie) and the first younger sister (damei) actually exist in face-to-face talks. The English people prefer to call the names of a person directly. The following example can clearly show this kind of difference:

"老三，快开门，"是他三叔克明的声音。

"Cheuh-hui open the door!" It is his third uncle. (Family: 65, by Ba Jin)

3.3.2. Gender Differentiations in Kinship Terms

Most of the Chinese kinship terms can denote the sex of the person we are talking to but some cannot. For example, the term "外甥" corresponds to both niece and nephew in English. The reason is that the matrilineal relationship in England is more important than the matrilineal relationship in China; some of the English kinship terms also do not convey sex differentiations. For example, the English kinship term "cousin" can express biaoge (表哥), biaodi (表弟), biaojie (表姐), biaomei (表妹), and so on. Therefore, in the English-to-Chinese or the Chinese-to-English translation，we should find the precise connotation of the kinship terms and give the original term an equivalent rendering.

3.3.3. Blood Ties in Kinship Terms

The Chinese have experienced a long time of matrilineal society in which the mother's family plays a key rule. Therefore, the kinship terms are the reflections of this tradition. For example, there are mainly two kinds of kinship terms in Chinese: one is the relation by consanguinity and the other is the relation by marriage. For example, a mother's brother and a father's brother have different terms. However, in English, those kinds of relationship are not distinguished. For example:

My grandfather is his cousin, so he is kith and kin to me somehow, if you can make that out, I can't.

我的祖父跟他是堂兄弟或表兄弟，因此，他和我有亲戚关系，也许你能够把这个关系弄清楚，我可没有办法弄清这个关系。(Martin Chuzzlewit by Charles Dickens, Chapter 5, p.162)

Here, the intention of the original author is to make clear the exact relationship between the grandfather and another person. The expression "cousin" shows that it is a kind of relationship between relatives. In English, there are no sub-terms to express "cousin". So the author uses the expression "kith and kin" to show that they belong to different kinds of cousin. However, in Chinese, we do classify "cousin" into two kinds according to the relation by consanguinity and relation by marriage. So it is quite proper to use "表兄弟" and "堂兄弟'' in Chinese to show the difference of blood relationship.

4. Relevance Theory and Translation

Many theorists and scholars have spared no pains to find out how human beings communicate with each other, which is also the essence of communication. As a theory based on communication and cognition, relevance theory will be introduced in this part and some of the basic concepts in relevance theory will be introduced as well.

4.1. Relevance Theory

RT mainly concerns the communication between languages, with communication and cognition as its key points. It is neither rule-based nor maxim-based but takes the following point as its principle.

The content, context and various implications of an utterance may raise different comprehensions in the hearer, and not all the assumptions available from the potential context are equally accessible at any given point in time. As a result, the hearer will use a single and universal standard to comprehend the utterance and this standard is sufficient to confirm the hearer a single way of comprehension. This standard is what we call relevance in relevance theory. (He & Ran 1998: 26)

According to Sperber and Wilson (1986: 54), the crucial mental faculty that enables human beings to communicate with one another is the ability to draw inferences from people's behavior.

RT argues that people make cognitive assumptions to interpret new information, the process of which automatically accords with the principle of relevance. In other words, people are inclined to combine new information with the interrelated background knowledge in their cognitive environment to interpret utterances so as to get to know the world. It is a universal goal in communication that the recipient is ready to acquire relevant information and the communicator tries to make his utterance as relevant as possible. In this light, the principle of relevance, by integrating verbal communication with relative cognitive environment, gives us some valuable insights into utterance comprehension in human communication and some explanations to the general laws involved in knowledge acquisition. (Sperber & Wilson 2001: 155)

4.1.1. Cognitive Context

The former pragmatics mainly considers context as a variety of visual and concrete factors in the external environment of communication, However, RT defines context of an utterance to be "the set of premises used in interpreting an utterance". (Sperber & Wilson1986: 15) It is "a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer's assumption about the world". (Sperber & Wilson 1986: 15) Hence in this definition, context in the relevance-theory framework refers to part of the hearer's "mental representation of the world", or the so-called "cognitive environment".

In RT, context does not refer to some part of the external environment of the communication partners, be it the text preceding or following an utterance, situational circumstances, cultural factors, and so on. It rather refers to part of their "assumption about the world''. (Gutt 2004: 27)

The cognitive environment of a person comprises a potentially huge amount of varied information. (Gutt 2004: 27) It not only includes the information in the physical environment but also the information that can be retrieved from the memory which may comprise information derived from preceding utterances plus any cultural or other knowledge stored there. However, any of the above information could serve as the potential context of an utterance, and the main question for successful communication is: "How do hearers manage to select the actual, speaker-intended assumptions from among all the assumptions they could use from their cognitive environment?" (Gutt 2004: 28)

In chapter III of Relevance: Communication and Cognition, Sperber argues that relevance can be characterized in terms of "contextual effect". Contextual effect is the relationship between the words and the context, the combination of the new information contained in the words and the old information. (Sperber & Wilson 2001: 109) Meanwhile, Sperber defines relevance by saying "An assumption is relevant in a context if and only if it has some contextual effect in that context". And in Gutt's

theory, context modifications are referred to as contextual effects. The notion of a contextual effect is essential to a description of the comprehension process. (Sperber & Wilson 2001: 118) The context assumptions can produce contextual effect in three ways:

1) The combination of the new information and the old information produces new contextual implication.

2) The new information emphasizes the present context assumptions.

3) The new information is contradictive to the present context assumptions and excludes the present context assumptions.

4.1.2. Intention

Sperber and Wilson have a discussion of mutual knowledge assumption, cognitive environment and mutual manifestness. (2001: 57) Mutual knowledge means that the human beings should make clear the contextual information to each other with the change of the content in communication. However, it is hard to be achieved in real situations. Therefore, Sperber and Wilson have suggested using "mutual manifestness" instead of "mutual knowledge". They explain that "cognitive environment" is the collection of a set of facts and assumptions people know and "mutual manifestness" is those facts and assumptions. The manifestness of cognitive environments is the key element of a successful communication. As has been proposed by Sperber and Wilson, communication is an ostensive-inferential process. In light of the speaker, communication is an ostensive process in which the intention is conveyed. Sperber and Wilson compare the code model and the inferential model, and meanwhile they analyze the major problems in Grice's theory of communication.

RT does not discard the code model，and on the contrary, they regard encoding and decoding as the basis of the inferential model. The pragmatic rule is just all extension of the grammatical rule. All in all, Sperber and Wilson look on communication as a cognitive activity. (Gutt 2004: 97)

Now, after making that statement clear, let's take a look at an important concept in relevance theory: intention.

Overt communication involves both informative and communicative intentions. The informative intention is the intention to inform the audience of something and the communicative intention is the intention to inform the audience of one's informative intention. (Wilson 2004: 139) People used to consider the purpose of translation as the transformation of meaning. But it could not solve the pragmatic problems involved in translation. In reality, the transformation involves not only the meaning, but also the intention. From the perspective of RT, the translator should transfer the informative intention of the source text as well as the communicative intention to make sure the success of communication. However, it is a quite idealized state. When the two terms of address are not equivalent to each other, the communicative intention is usually preferred because it is more important. For example:

雨村道：“后知火焚草亭，鄙下深为惶恐。今日幸得相逢，益叹老先瓮道德高深。奈鄙人下愚不移，致有今日!’’

Yu-stun replied: "later I was very worried to hear that your temple had been burned down, Now that I air lucky enough to meet you again, I am sure your virtue must be

even greater. As for me, owing to my own inveterate folly, I have now been reduced to this." (The Dream of the Red Chamber by Cao Xueqin, trans. Yang Xianyi & Gladys Yang, 2007: 185)

The Chinese people used to have the habit of using humble words to address them, which is reflected in address terms. (Ma & Chang 1997: 117) In China, using humble words is considered as a virtue. The number of self-addressing terms is large and the usage is complex. They can indicate status, gender, identity and profession. In this example, the information the term "鄙人" shows to the Chinese people is that the speaker uses this term to call himself and the speaker is polite to the hearer. However, Western cultures do not consider using humble words as a good behavior. And in translation，the cognitive environment of the target readers and their ability of acceptance should be thought over. If we translate "鄙人" into "I the humble man", we may confuse the target readers who lack the same cognitive environment as the Chinese readers do and cause failures in communication. To make a successful communication, here we had better make clear the communicative intention of the author and translate "鄙人" simply into "I".

4.1.3. Optimal Relevance

According to Sperber and Wilson (Sperber & Wilson 1986: 88), the human beings have the nature to notice, state, and process and interpret the information that is relevant to them. In the process of communication，the communicators will make clear that his/her information has some relevance to the audience in addition to informing the audience of something. Therefore, the audience may infer the addresser's intention and interpret the utterance correctly with the presumption of such relevance. Sperber and Wilson define relevance as follows:

Extent l: an assumption is relevant in a context to the extent that its contextual effects on this context are large.

Extent 2: an assumption is relevant in a context to the extent that the effort required to process it in this context is small. (Sperber & Wilson 2001: 125)

This definition shows that there are mainly two factors that relevance is dependent on: contextual effects and processing effort. (Gutt 2004: 31) Contextual effects which have been mentioned in section 4.1.1 are important factors in evaluating the degrees of relevance, which we can conclude from the words: "having contextual effects is a necessary condition for relevance, and that other things being equal, the greater the contextual effects, the greater the relevance." (ibid: 119) The processing effort is the second important factor to be taken into consideration in evaluating degrees of relevance, which can be inferred from "processing effort is a negative factor: other things being equal, the greater the processing effort, the lower the relevance" (ibid: 124).

In RT, both the addresser and the audience attempt to pursue optimal relevance. "Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance". (Sperber & Wilson 1986: 158) It is believed to be the principle of relevance. The central claim of RT is that human communication crucially creates all expectation of optimal relevance. (Gutt 2004: 31) That is to say, it is an expectation on the part of the hearer that his attempt at interpretation will yield adequate contextual effects at the minimal processing cost. The audience always focuses on the

most accessible information first when searching for optimal relevance, for it costs less processing effort. However, sometimes it is hard for the audience to produce an adequate contextual effect, so he/she will have to make more effort to find out the real intention of the communicator. It will be worthwhile as long as the processing effort can be balanced by the benefits of obtaining contextual effects. In addition, relevance is a comparative notion, and addressing in utterances varies according to the degree of relevance they achieve in some context.

4.2. Relevance Theory in Translation Studies

In the following part, we will make a review of the studies made by scholars at home and abroad on translation from the perspective of RT.

4.2.1. Studies in Western Countries

Ever since RT came into being, it has exerted a big influence on many subjects. However, it is Gutt, a student of Sperber and Wilson, who applies this theory to the field of translation, whose ideas are clearly interpreted in the work Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context (Gutt 2004). Gutt first explains some of the contradictions in translation and concludes that RT has a great explanatory power over translation. He also claims that faithfulness in translation is to communicate an intended interpretation of the source text through adequate contextual effects achieved without unnecessary processing efforts. He boldly claims that "the principles, rules and guidelines of translation are applications of the principles of relevance". (ibid: 198) The task of the translator is to expose the intention of the original author and provide the optimal relevance through the contextual effects. Therefore, the target readers can understand the original text without too much processing effort. Naturally, Gutt's points of view have attracted different comments, some of which criticize his unscientific way of study. However, we have still got many inspirations from his thoughts.

4.2.2. Studies in China

The Chinese scholars have also noticed the explanatory power of RT in translation. It is Li Kenan (the author of A Reductionist Approach to Translatology, 1996) who first introduced the relevance-theory study of translation into China. And later on, Zhao Yanchun (the author of A Theoretical Research on Pragmatics and Cognition, 2001) made a research on translation from the perspective of RT. In his book A Reductionist Approach to Translatology, Li Kenan mainly talks about some of the contradictions in translation studies, especially the controversial concept of untranslatability. He explains to what extent equivalence can be achieved. These two phenomena are invalidated through applying Sperber's and Gutt's theory. He also explains the phenomenon of cultural default in translation; he defines translation as "an act of ostensive-inferential intralingual or interlingual interpretation of a source text". (ibid: 426) Therefore, in his opinion, the default information does not form a mutual cognitive environment for the communicators and it can be filtered in the process of translation. Other scholars like He Ziran (2001) also give positive opinions on the application of RT in translation. In Part Four, we will discuss if RT can explain the cultural default in translation.

4.2.3. A Relevance-theory Approach to Translation

The various translation theories proposed by different scholars can be classified into descriptive or prescriptive approaches. RT goes beyond the bounds of this and views interlingual communication as a single ostensive-inferential process. However, translation consists of a double ostensive-inferential process. That is to say, translation has three parts: the original author, the translator and the target reader. During the process of translation, the translator should first use his/her cognitive environment to infer the original author's intention and to find the optimal relevance. The cognitive context of the target text is unknown before the text is published and the translator should make the context of the target text raise the reader's interest. Therefore, the translator should know his or her potential readers with proper cognitive context and let the translator and the readers share the optimal relevance.

Next we should have a look at the principle of translation. In section 4.2.1, we have talked about the principle of relevance, which is to find the optimal relevance during the process of translation. In terms of judging to what extent the target text resembles the source text, the principle of relevance plays an important part. Relevance depends on two elements: processing effort and contextual effects. The key point of communication depends on whether the speaker and the audiences can find the optimal relevance, and the optimal relevance is a dynamic concept because it depends on the cognitive context provided by the translator and the target readers' cognitive effort. If the translator gives the target text readers the explanation in accordance with the principle of relevance, the target text and the source text will have resemblance. And that is also the principle of translation.

4.3. Cultural Default and Equivalence

4.3.1. Cultural Default from the Perspective of Relevance Theory

Cultural default, though a natural result and common phenomenon in communication, often gives rise to failure in cross-cultural communication. In this part, the phenomenon of cultural default will be discussed from the perspective of RT.

4.3.1.1. The Definition of Cultural Default

Cultural default is defined as the absence of relevant cultural background knowledge shared by the author and his/her intended readers in their communication through texts. Cultural default is a cognitive matter in human communication in nature and RT, with communication and cognition as its core，can explain cultural default.

4.3.1.2. Cultural Default from the Perspective of Relevance Theory

As the pragmatic theory, RT is to find the inner relationship between different objects through cognitive environments. Generally speaking, people who live in the same sociocultural environment usually have shared cultural background knowledge, and this mutual cultural knowledge is presupposed in their communication. Cultural background knowledge forms an intrinsic part of an individual's cognitive environment and exists in the form of encyclopedic assumption schemas which can be completed into full-fledged assumptions on the basis of certain contextual information.

Wang Bin (2000: 13) criticizes RT because he thinks it fails to explain cultural default. However, Zhao Yanchun (Zhao, 2005: 88) explains that RT has enough explanatory power over cultural default on the basis of the following three statements:

Translation allows the existence of cultural default and what's more, translation cannot avoid cultural default. And all cognitive and communicative process of human beings cannot avoid default. RT is also based on cognition and communication. Therefore, translation and RT theory are mutually compatible. Here is an example:

他就是个李逵，说不上两句话就亮刀子。

He is really a Li Kui: any words can bring him into rage. (Zhao Yanchun 2005: 154)

In Chinese culture, "Li Kui" is a character in the famous classic work Outlaws of the Marsh, who is well-known for his bad temper. He usually pulls out his two axes before fighting. He is familiar to most of the Chinese and has become a fixed figure to describe the people who have the same kind of character. However, the English readers may not have the same kind of cognitive environment, so the cultural background information contained here is seemingly omitted in this utterance. However, by the hint of the following contextual information "any words can bring him into rage'', it is easy for the Chinese addresser to make clear his idea to the English readers that he is a man of bad temper, In this way, the default can be compensated to some extent.

When an utterance is formed, the unnecessary information is usually omitted in the process of communication. People tend to focus on the most relevant information which can help them form adequate assumptions. The so-called optimal relevance is in fact the relevance that has filtered out the unnecessary trivial information.

When processing the information, people tend lo get the maximal contextual effect with minimal processing efforts. And which part of the information should be adopted depends on the predilection and attention of the hearer. Dealing with cultural default in translation is also based on it. However, dealing with cultural default in translation is more complex than in the common communication, because cultural default in translation originates from the cultural idiosyncrasy. But cultural idiosyncrasy is a sort of relative concept, because we all own the same world and have the same kind of feelings which we express by different language codes. According to the nature of language, we can say that even languages created in different times cannot be translated. However, according to the nature of translation, it is workable because the core of translation is to communicate. (Zhao 2005: 150)

4.3.2. Equivalence from the Perspective of Relevance Theory

Language systems are different. Therefore, the understanding of certain language codes by different people is also different. In this sense, it seems that "equivalence" is impossible. However, communication can be realized among human beings because people's intentions can be expressed. So we can say that "equivalence" really exists. This forms a contradiction in translation. Because of this nature of "equivalence", we must try to find the "equivalence" on condition that there is no absolute equivalence between languages.

Language and information depend on each other. Language is the tool of conveying information. Information and its conveyance have formed an integral part. When we see a signifier, we call infer what it is signified. However, although we may find that certain words have their equivalents in another language, when the language environment changes, the connotation of the words will change too. It is also the

reason why Grice introduces the inferential model and why Sperber and Wilson develop the inferential model.

The inferential model wants to expose the original author's intention, namely, to find the optimal relevance between the utterances and the context for the purpose of realizing the communicative effect.

4.3.3. The Relativity of Equivalence

If we say that there is no "equivalence" between languages, we make the statement on two elements: one is that there is no static "equivalence" between languages; otherwise, we can do translations through machines. The other is that the statement reflects the nature of language. The process of finding "equivalence" is dynamic and when we are doing translations, we must make a reasonable choice under the cognitive environment.

RT does not discard equivalence, but prefers to comprehend equivalence in a dynamic way. Equivalence not only refers to the equivalence of language, but also the equivalence of intention. The ideal way of translation is to achieve equivalence both in language and intention, which is the so-called absolute equivalence. However, that idealized state can never be achieved because people in different areas have different ways to express a subject or a phenomenon, so the encoding of the world is different. Meanwhile, the grammatical rules in different languages are also different. But it does not mean that translation is impossible because we share the same world and the same feelings. The relevance-theory approach of translation is to achieve equivalence on the basis of successful communication. And in this sense, equivalence is a relative concept.

5. Translation of Kinship Terms

In the following part, the translation methods of kinship terms will be discussed, focusing on the cultural default contained in the kinship terms.

5.1. Methods to Reconstruct the Cultural Default in Translating Kinship Terms

Scholars have worked out many translation methods to solve the problem of cultural default in the translation of kinship terms, which are introduced in the following part.

5.1.1. Literal Translation

In the Chinese and English kinship systems, there are some terms that correspond to each other. For example, the Chinese kinship terms "祖父", "祖母", "父亲", "母亲", "儿子", "女儿", "孙子'' and "孙女" can find their equivalents in the English kinship system. Some scholars call this kind of kinship terms neutral terms which include all the terms addressing relatives for the purpose of designation, showing little emotional feeling such as respect or modesty. This type of kinship terms in the source language can find their equivalents in the target language. If the intention of the original author to use those kinship terms is to show their original designation alone, we can use literal translation to deal with them.

5.1.2. Free Translation

However, the kinship terms do not always convey their original designative meanings. Sometimes they are used for special purposes, which make the translation really a complex work. Therefore, we must use special methods to deal with them.

5.1.2.1. Generalization and Specification

Generally speaking, the English kinship terms, due to the influence of culture, are more general. On the contrary, the Chinese kinship terms are more specific and complicated. We have discussed in Part Two that most of the English kinship terms do not show seniority, consanguinity or sex differentiation. Therefore, when we do Chinese-English translations, we prefer to use generalization. When doing English-Chinese translations, we use specification. The most obvious example is the translation of "Sister Carrie" quoted by Bao Huinan (2001: 65). Someone wants to translate it into "嘉莉姑娘", which changes the kinship term into a common appellative word. In this way, some of the information in thesource text is lost in the process of translation. How to translate "sister'' gives problems to the translators. Those who are familiar with America literature know that a younger sister of the author who lived a hard life like the author himself is the prototype of the heroine. So it is proper to translate "Sister Carrie" into "嘉莉妹妹", which gives the Chinese readers more detailed information about the personal identity of the heroine.

5.1.2.2. Conversion

There are fewer kinship terms in English than in Chinese and most of the kinship terms in English are quite vague and general in meaning. Therefore, some of them should be converted from one term to another so that they can correspond to those in the source text and at the same time accommodate the norms and conditions of the target language. For example:

黛玉虽不曾识成，听见他母亲说过：大舅贾郝之子贾琏，娶的就是二舅母王氏的内侄女，自幼假充男儿教养，学名叫作王熙凤。黛玉忙陪笑见礼，以"嫂"呼之。

Though Tai-yu had never met her, she knew from her mother that Chia Lien, the son of her first uncle Chian Sheh, had married the niece of Lady Wang, her second uncle's wife. She had been educated like a boy and given the school name Hsi-feng.Tai-yu lost no time in greeting her with a smile as "cousin". (The Dream of the Red Chamber by Cao Xueqin, trans. Yang Xianyi & Gladys Yang 2007: 158)

This example shows the situation of Tai-yu first meeting His-feng who was introduced by the author as the wife of Chia Lien. So Tai-yu should greet her as "嫂" (sao) which means "sister-in-law". However, we all know that the family relationship in The Dream of the Red Chamber by Cao Xueqin is quite complex. And according to the patrilineal relationship, Tai-yu and Chia Lien actually belong to two families and their relationship is equal to that indicated by "cousin" in English. And as the wife of Chia Lien, His-feng and Tai-yu are also cousins. So "cousin" can give the target readers a clearer understanding of the relationship between Hsi-feng and Tai-yu than "sister-in-law".

5.1.2.3. Amplification and Omission

Amplification refers to the technique of retaining the kinship terms in the source language and meanwhile adding a few words which can bridge the cultural gap to help the target readers understand the pragmatic meaning. When the target readers have difficulties in understanding accurately the figurative or associative meanings of the kinship terms, this kind of method is really helpful. For example:

令*姐*孙夫人生翦，极为思念夫人。

Your honorable sister Mrs. Sun missed you very much during her lifetime. (A Practical Coursebook On Translation, Feng Qinhua 2008: 326)

In this example, Deng Yingchao (邓颖超) uses a polite and respectful tone which is also reflected in the kinship terms. Stylistically, "令姐" is a polite form of address, and the polite tone in this letter is quite important because it is of political use. If we simply translate it into "sister", some of the pragmatic meanings will be lost. So we had better add "honorable" before "sister" to show the original tone.

Omission refers to the technique of deleting unnecessary parts of the source text in the target text. Here is another example:

每遇客从远方来，道及夫人起居，更引起怀旧之情。近闻夫人健康如常，甚感欣慰。

Every time a friend comes from afar and mentions your daily life, I can not help recalling the past. It is a great comfort to me when I hear that you are in good health. (A Practical Coursebook on Translation, Feng Qinhua 2008: 326)

In this example, "夫人" is also a polite form of address. But why do we use omission here? Deng Yingchao uses "夫人" to address Song Meiling (宋美龄), the person she is speaking to. Literally, "夫人" means "your ladyship" here. However, if we translate it into"your ladyship", we may give the target readers an impression that the two persons are not on equal status because of the cultural difference. To avoid failures in communication, it is better to omit the polite tone which is of less importance.

5.1.2.4. Paraphrase

If the methods mentioned above fail to make the source text clear, we can use paraphrases to give more detailed information about what we want to say. Please look at the following example:

哥儿们，都瞧我了!我请安了!都是自己弟兄，别伤了和气呀!

Brothers, look at me, I am praying my respects to you, we are all one big family-don't do anything to uset our friendship. (Teahouse by Lao She 2004: 34)

In this sentence the initial purpose of the speaker to use "弟兄" is to emphasize the intimate relationship between the speaker and the hearers. That is to say, the socialized function of this kinship term is more obvious than its original designation. If "都是自己弟兄" is changed into "都是自己人", it makes no difference to the Chinese readers because the original designative meaning of "弟兄" is not important. Therefore, it is proper to paraphrase it into "we are all one big family", which clearly shows the intention of the speaker.

5.2. Reconstructing the Cultural Default from the Perspective of Relevance Theory

According to RT, every act of ostensive communication communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance. The translator should find all the possible information to convey the original meaning of the source text to help the target readers to form a right assumption and filter the unnecessary trivial information which gives little help to the target readers' right understanding. Here I quote an example to show how to find the optimal relevance in translating:

红玉道："平姐姐说：我们奶奶问这里奶奶好。原是我二爷不在家，虽然迟了两天，只管请奶奶放心。等五奶奶好些，我们奶奶还会了五奶奶来瞧奶奶呢。五奶奶前儿打法了人来说，舅奶奶带了信来了，问奶奶好，还要和这里的姑奶奶寻两丸延年神验万全丹，若有了，奶奶打法人来，只管送在我们奶奶这里。明儿有人去，就顺路给那边舅奶奶带去的。"

She said, "Our Lady sends her compliments to her Ladyship. Our Second Master is away from home now, so Her Ladyship shouldn't worry over a couple of days' delay. When the Fifth Mistress is better, our Lady will come with her to see Her Ladyship. The Fifth Mistress sent a servant the other day to report that our lady's sister -in-law would oblige her with two longevity pills. If Her Ladyship has any to spare, please send them to our lady, and the next person to go that way will deliver him to her sister-in-law. (The Dream of the Red Chamber by Cao Xueqin, trans. Yang Xianyi & Gladys Yang 2007: 199)

In this passage, the term "nainai (奶奶)" is used fourteen times and none of them shows the meaning of "grandmother". The translator specifies the meaning of all these terms into "lady (ship), mistress, her, sister-in-law". By using this kind of paraphrase, the intention of the author is well expressed, and the status and the identity of those women are clearly shown. However, part of the stylistic character of the original text has been lost. The original author intends to use repetition to show that the speaker has a good skill of expression. Because of the difference in language structures, the repetition is hard to express in English if we want to maintain the original meaning of the text. In this case, we must make a choice according to the contextual effect and the optimal relevance. Obviously, to make clear the identity of the figures is more important than to show the same kind of figure of speech. Let us imagine that, if we all use "nainai" here like what Lin Yutang did in his Moment in Peking, the target readers who lack the same cognitive environment as the Chinese will be confused by the relationship that the speaker describes. Let us discuss in detail how RT works in the translation of kinship terms.

5.2.1. The Exploration of the Original Intention

As has been mentioned in section 4.1.3, the intention of the original author involves both informative intention and communicative intention. According to Gutt, "the intended interpretation of an utterance consists of its explicatures and/or implicatures. Thus to say that a translation should communicate the same interpretation as that intended in the original means that it should convey to the receptors all and only those explicatures and implicatures that the original was intended to convey." (2004: 99) So a translator should first of all detect the intention of the writer. Let us see the following group of examples:

Example 1

老兄，你可知道头发是我们中国人的宝贝和冤家，古今来多少人在这上头吃些毫无价值的苦啊!

You know, my friend, in China hair is our pride and our bane. How many people since ancient times have suffered because of it, all to no purpose? (Call to Arms trans. by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang 2002: 128)

In the original text, the speaker is described as an odd and inexplicable person. The author and this speaker are not brothers and they are even not familiar with each other. Here "老兄" is just used as a common appellative word to draw the hearers' attention. In my opinion, there are two kinds of translation that can be used here considering the speaker's intention. The first one is "my friend", which is the closest one to "老兄" both in the communicative intention and the structure. The second choice is to omit this kinship term since there are actually no specific meanings in it. Both of these two methods are acceptable from the perspective of the target readers. In the Chinese people's cognitive environment, "老兄" can be used as an appellative term between close friends. However, the English readers do not have the same kind of cognitive environment. So here, the expression "my brother" does not conform to the habit of the English people. Some people may say that there are similar cases in Outlaws of the Marsh (Wang Lina 1998), but most of them are translated into "brother". As we can see, the big contexts of Call to Arms and Outlaws of the Marsh are different. In Outlaws of the Marsh, the outlaws are sworn brothers and the target readers will not feel strange to see them call each other brothers. However, in Call to Arms, the only information we know from the author is that the speaker is odd and they are not quite familiar with each other. Their relationship is not close enough to call each other "brother". In this sense, to use "brother" is a little bit abrupt for the target readers.

Example 2

吃人的是我哥哥!我是吃人的人的兄弟!

The eater of human flesh is my elder brother! I am the younger brother of an eater of human flesh. (Call to Arms Trans. By Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang 2002: 32)

Here the method of specification is used because the intention of the author to use "兄弟" is just to clarify the relationship, and "兄弟" in the sentence just means "younger brother", so what the translators need to do is just to express the accurate information.

Example 3

That was the red officers' habit of saying, "come on, boys!" instead of "go on, boys!"

这就是红军军宫习惯说的"弟兄们，跟我来!"而不是说："弟兄们，向前冲!" (Red Star over China by Edgar Snow, 2001: 384)

If "boys" is translated into "孩子们", the Chinese readers will feel uncomfortable. In this context, "boys" and "弟兄们" have the same pragmatic function. So "弟兄们" can be called a successful translation.

5.2.2. Optimal Relevance in Translating Kinship Terms

As has been mentioned in Part Three and Part Four, "the central claim of relevance theory is that human communication crucially creates all expectation of optimal

relevance, that is, an expectation on the part of the hearer that his attempt at interpretation will yield adequate contextual effects at minimal processing cost". (Gutt 2004: 32) To put more correctly, the expectation created in the hearer is that the communicator believes that the intended interpretation will yield adequate effects without unnecessary processing efforts.

According to Sperber and Wilson, the hearer has the right to assume that the first interpretation he arrives at is the interpretation intended by the communicator. For the hearers, when they manage to select the right set of contextual assumptions from what they know, they turn first to highly accessible information.

As to the cultural default in translation，it is the information that does not belong to the mutual cognitive environment and it is the filtered trivial information that gives little influence on the target reader's understanding. That is to say，the default information cannot help the audience to form adequate assumptions. Therefore, the translator must choose what to convey and what not according to the principle of relevance. Let us see the following group of examples.

Example l

况且，一想到昨天遇见祥林嫂的事，也就使我不能安住。

Besides, the thought of my meeting with Xiang Lin's wife the previous day was preying on my mind. (Wandering by Lu Xun 1981: 6)

Example 2

看客中间，八一嫂是心肠最好的人，抱着伊的两属岁的遗腹子，正在七斤嫂身边看热闹。

Widow Ba Yi had the kindest heart of all the onlookers there. Carrying her two-year-old, born after her husband's death, she was watching the fun at Mrs. Sevenpounder's side. (Call to Arms trans. by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang 2002: 156)

Example 3

一家便是单壁的单四嫂子，他自从前年守了寡，便须专靠自己的一双手纺出棉纱来，养活她自己和他三岁的儿子，所以睡的也迟。

By midnight there were only two households awake: The house next door where Fourth Shan's wife lived. For, left a widow two years earlier, she had nothing but the-cotton yam she spun to support herself and her three-year-old boy, this is why she also slept late. (Call to Arms trans. by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang 2002: 98)

Example 4

我孩子时候，在斜对门的豆腐店里确实终日坐着一个杨二嫂，人都叫伊"豆腐西施"。

When I was a child there was a Mrs Yang who used to sit nearly all day long in the beancurd shop across the road，and everybody used to call her Beancurd Beauty. (Call to Arms trans. by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang 2002: 182)

Example 5

"谁不知道你正经，…短见是万万寻不得的"邹七嫂也从旁边说。

"Everybody knows you are a good woman," put in Mrs Zou from the side. "You mustn't think of committing suicide." (Call to Arms trans. by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang 2002: 252)

Literally, the Chinese kinship term "嫂(子)" designates the wife of one's elder brother. And it has a socialized meaning to call married women in the southern Chinese dialect, which is almost equivalent to the usage of "Mrs." However, "Mrs." is used as a courtesy title for a married or a widowed woman before the surname or full name of her husband. (See The American Heritage Dictionary) Therefore, the designation of the two words is not quite the same. Here there are five examples and the translator gave three types of translations. In examples 1, 2 and 3, the heroines are miserable women with low status in the society whose names are not clear even in the article. Although Lu Xun shows his compassion to the miserable life of the heroines, he also wants to criticize their numbness towards their miserable life. According to the principle of relevance, the words a translator chooses should serve this purpose. So the term "Mrs.'' cannot let the target readers understand the author's attitude towards those women. Therefore, a description of the identity of those heroines is more proper here. And in example 2, the translator uses "widow" to make clear the situation of the heroine. In the source text, the author has mentioned that she had a two-year-old son born after her husband's death. From this information, the target readers can find that she was a widow. In addition, to use "Widow Ba Yi" will give the target readers all impression that her own name is Ba Yi, which is indeed her husband's name. So I think it is more proper to use "Ba Yi's wife" here.

And in examples 4 and 5, the two women actually did not bear the same miserable fate as the first three. However, both of them are described as selfish persons and gossip mongers. The authors also take a critical attitude towards them. Although their lives are not as miserable as the first three, they do not win the respect from the authors. So we think that, to use the "one's wife'' to translate "嫂" is more proper than to use "Mrs.".

From the group of examples we can see that, translation is a kind of optimal relevance. "Foreignization, domestication and translatability all accord with this principle. We have to learn to find optimal relevance in all acceptable scale. " (Zhao 2005: 154).

6. Conclusions

Every language has its own system of kinship terms to denote the interrelationship between relatives. Because of the difference in culture, Chinese and English bear many differences in their kinship terms as well as their usage, which produces obstacles to the translators. Many studies have been done to solve the problems made by the cultural gap between China and the West. Functionalism is frequently used to explain those phenomena.

We try to investigate the translation of kinship terms as a whole system and to find a proper way to solve the problems in translation from the perspective of relevance theory.

According to RT, translation is a kind of communication at its core. The content, context and various implications of all utterances may cause different comprehensions in the hearer, and not all the assumptions available from the potential context are equally accessible at any given point in time. Therefore, a translator should find the

optimal relevance according to different situations. The main problem we may meet in the translation of kinship terms is cultural default. The previous studies have provided such methods to solve this problem as generalization, specialization, conversion, amplification, omission and paraphrase. These methods are workable to some extent in a local level. However, as we can see, translation is a dynamic process and no static method can solve problems in a changing situation. From the perspective of RT, we must take the content, context and the target reader's ability of acceptance into full consideration. Cultural default is mainly considered as the filtered information which only causes difficulties in the process of communication. Therefore, the translator can simply omit it.

It may be argued that it breaks the rule of faithfulness. As has been mentioned in the above parts, the nature of translation is communication. If a translated version fails to make clear the original meaning to the target reader, how can we call it a translation?

All in all, as to the question of equivalence，it is a concept in a scale. That is to say, equivalence has degrees. There is no absolute equivalence but the convergence of meaning. Equivalence guided by optimal relevance means to find the closest one in that scale. Therefore, from the analyses we can see that RT has a great explanatory power over the translation of kinship terms.

However, since RT investigates translation in a macroscopically level, it is hard for translators to find a concrete standard to evaluate translation which may cause many arguments in the quality of a translation work. Anyway, it provides a new approach to the translation of kinship terms and we believe that further studies in this field will yield more excellent findings in the future.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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