

***CULTURAL DEPTH IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION: EXPLORING
THE INTERPRETATION OF CHINESE CULTURE-SPECIFIC TERMS IN
CROSS-CULTURAL NEGOTIATIONS***

Zhou Huili

Guangdong Technology College

Wang Minna

Guangdong Technology College

Song Xixi

Guangdong Technology College

Nor Saidi Mohamed Nasir

Faculty of Business, Hospitality and Technology,
Universiti Islam Melaka

*Corresponding Author's Email: 48827705@qq.com

Article History:

Received : 23 January 2024

Revised : 5 November 2024

Published : 5 November 2024

© Penerbit Universiti Islam Melaka

To cite this article:

Zhou, H., Wang, M., Song, X., & Mohamed Nasir, N. S. (2024). Cultural Depth In Business Communication: Exploring The Interpretation of Chinese Culture-Specific Terms In Cross-Cultural Negotiations. *Journal of Business Innovation*, 9(1), 1-17

ABSTRACT

In today's globalized business landscape, as international business engaged with China are growing, understanding the nuanced meanings embedded in Chinese culture-specific terms in business negotiations becomes paramount for achieving mutually beneficial outcomes. Drawing from linguistic, cognitive and cultural theories, this study delves into the intricate interplay between language, culture, and business negotiation by focusing on the interpretation strategies of Chinese culture-specific terms. This research employs a qualitative approach to uncover the multifaceted layers of meanings that Chinese culture-

specific terms carry within cross-cultural business negotiation contexts. By conducting comprehensive literature reviews, examining real-life negotiation scenarios, and doing interviews with experienced negotiators, the study investigates the interpretation strategies of Chinese culture-specific terms and how the interpretation of them can influence negotiation dynamics, and in the end, the overall success of business transactions.

Keywords: *Chinese culture-specific terms, business negotiation, intercultural communication, interpretation strategy.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Since the arrival of the era of global economic integration, international business communication and cooperation becomes much more frequent. Along the path of economic globalization, there are a lot of opportunities for cross-cultural communication and business negotiations and also challenges. As more and more participants engaged in international business negotiations come from diverse cultures, cultural conflicts occur during the negotiation process. The reason for that is cultural items embedded in a specific dialogue cannot easily be recognized because people view phenomena from different perspectives. As a result, what is clear-cut in one culture may be murky and ambiguous in another. Newmark (1988) also argued that translation problems occur when language becomes increasingly specific and, therefore, more culturally focused. Due to these cultural discrepancies, translators often struggle to employ the proper translation techniques to transmit these elements from the source text to the target language.

In addition, many Chinese culture-specific words are rich in historical or cultural implications, which take on different meanings based on the context they are used in, and the Chinese culture, generally speaking, influenced by Confucianism for quite a long time, are quite different in many aspects with Western cultures. Without a deep understanding of the Chinese cultural context, during the process of business negotiations, these words can be misconstrued. It's necessary for an interpreter to identify the complexity of cross-cultural business negotiation context, foster a high sense of cross-cultural awareness, examine closely the connotations of each Chinese culture-specific words and adopt appropriate negotiation strategies to greatly minimize these cultural shocks in business negotiations. A well-qualified interpreter is supposed to act as an adequate intermediary to promote mutual understanding and build trust between negotiators in the process.

1.2 Objective of the Study

Through comprehensive study of Chinese culture-specific words in cross-cultural business negotiation, this research aims to achieve the following objectives:

(1) This study employed a comprehensive approach to delve into the multifaceted meanings embedded within culture-specific words, encompassing both their explicit and implied connotations, and also classifications of culture-specific words. The exploration

encompassed an examination of not only the literal definitions of these Chinese culture-specific words but also the cultural, contextual, and pragmatic layers that contribute to their richness. In order to systematically analyze and categorize these meanings, the study drew from various theoretical foundations, including linguistic theories, cultural studies, and pragmatics. These foundations provided the framework for dissecting the intricate interplay between language and culture, as well as the mechanisms by which culture-specific words convey nuanced messages beyond their surface definitions. The classification process involved grouping culture-specific words based on their semantic dimensions and cultural implications. By discerning patterns in the ways these words are used and understood within specific contexts, the study aimed to establish a taxonomy that captures the diverse layers of meaning they hold. By applying theoretical lenses and empirical observations, the study aimed to bridge the gap between the intricate world of cultural semantics and the practical realm of cross-cultural interactions.

(2) By examining real-life instances of cross-cultural communication, the study aims to identify the various interpretation strategies employed by negotiators to bridge cultural gaps and convey intended meanings, trying to determine the influencing factors that may become barriers to successful conveyance of implied cultural meanings in words. Furthermore, the study acknowledges the multifaceted nature of these influencing factors. Perception of information, attribution bias, negotiation power dynamics all contribute to the complexity of understanding and conveying cultural meanings within words. By delving into these factors, the research seeks to shed light on the challenges that interpreter face when interpreting culture-specific terms. By identifying common patterns and techniques, the research aims to provide insights into effective approaches for ensuring accurate interpretation of cultural meanings.

(3) The findings highlight the significance of cultural depth in business communication, showcasing how a nuanced understanding of Chinese culture-specific terms can bridge cultural gaps, mitigate misunderstandings, and facilitate trust in cross-cultural business negotiations. The study illuminates how a comprehensive grasp of these terms transcends mere linguistic translation and extends into the realm of cultural interpretation, resulting in profound implications for successful negotiation outcomes. Negotiators armed with this nuanced understanding possess a powerful tool for bridging cultural gaps that can often impede smooth communication and collaboration. Ultimately, this study highlights how the synergy between linguistic interpretation and cultural insight can act as a catalyst for more fruitful cross-cultural negotiations.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The database of CNKI have show that studies centered around the keyword “culture-specific words” have been on the rise since 2006, and there are 1646 pieces of academic dissertations, including 8 pieces of doctoral dissertations. Extensive examination of previous studies both at home and abroad have shown that researches on culture-loaded terms have been conducted from different perspectives. Some theses have explored culture-specific words from theoretical perspective, including cognitive linguistics,

manipulation theory, cultural schema theory, eco-translatology and so on, while others mainly focus on their pragmatic use, the translation strategies of culture-specific words within different contexts, such as tourism or literature, particularly Chinese novels or poems. As relative researches probe deeper into this topic, we began to recognize the application of culture-specific words in various contexts. Vocabulary may thus serve as a springboard for cultural exploration, guiding learners toward a more nuanced awareness and appreciation of culture, as well as enhancing intercultural competence (Hurst, S. K., 2022:1083).

Research on culture-loaded words would help foster a deeper understanding of different cultures, allowing individuals to gain insights into the unique concepts, values, and traditions that shape societies around the world. By understanding the cultural connotations of specific words, individuals can engage in more respectful and culturally sensitive interactions, reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings and unintentional offense. In the business world, understanding culture-loaded words is crucial for successful negotiations, as it prevents misinterpretations and contributes to building trust and rapport with international partners.

As for translation strategies of culture-specific words, Chen Yiliang (2023) studied the translation strategy in *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* from the perspective of foreignization or domestication. It probes into the percentage of various kinds of culture-loaded words according to Eugene Nida's classification and examines how various translation strategies are applied closely. Song Hangling (2022) takes *To Live* as a case study to illustrate that the translator Michael Berry different translation strategies such as literal translation, annotation, free translation and substitution, demonstrating different translator behaviors and performance. A thesis by Youssef, S. S., & Albarakati, M. A. (2023) introduces the triangle of culture-specific metaphor on taboos (TCMT) to explain the intertwined relation between metaphor, culture and taboo, and finds that metaphor can be used as a means of euphemism when tackling translation of taboos. From the perspective of foreignization and domestication, two typical ways of translation, some scholars insist on preserving the essence of Chinese language and culture when doing interpretation, and regard free translation only as an auxiliary means (Qiu Jin, 2022). However, when doing translation of culture-specific words, no matter what strategies are adopted, cultural losses are inevitable (Chen, S., Mansor, N. S., Mooisan, C., & Abdullah, M. A. R., 2023).

In summary, these previous studies have mainly looked into the translation of culture-specific words in written literature, as they are well recorded and materials are abundant to be found, but seldom delve into the real-time interpretation of culture-loaded words in practical scenarios, for instance, in business negotiation. As a matter of fact, in today's globalized world, with business transactions engaged with China are increasing, it is important for both interpreters and negotiators to understand each other's cultural implication embodied in words, and avoid any cultural gaps that could possibly obstruct real-time negotiation. Studies on this aspect is worth doing for both theoretical and practical reasons.

3.0 OVERVIEW OF CULTURE-SPECIFIC TERMS

3.1 Definition of Culture-specific Words

Culture-specific words, or referred to as culture-loaded words, can be defined as terms, expressions, or vocabulary that are closely tied to a particular culture or community and may not have direct equivalents or may carry different meanings in other cultures. Culture-loaded term have a distinct cultural connotation and folk style, as seen in indigenous ethnic literary works (Sun Lin, & Han Caihong,2021:91). Pratama (2021) defines cultural words as certain expressions whose meanings are difficult to translate since cultural words have no equivalents or counterparts in the target audience’s cultural system. In practice, these words often reflect the unique values, traditions, practices, and concepts of a specific group of people.

They can encompass a wide range of subjects, including food and cuisine, clothing and fashion, customs and traditions, religion and spirituality, geographical features, local flora and fauna, social norms and values, architecture and art, language and expressions, historical and mythological references, emotions and feelings, ethnic and racial identity, and many more. For examples, as for historical and mythological references, that is, terms linked to historical events, figures, or mythological stories that are culturally significant, examples include “Samurai”, “Cleopatra”, “Norse mythology”, and “The Silk Road”. They all contains either historical or mythological implications, and cannot be easily interpreted without explanation of their connotations. Take another example. Words reflecting cultural attitudes, behaviors, and social concepts are referred to as social norms and values. Different social norms and values are taken for granted by different social systems. “Collectivism” is a cultural and social concept that emphasizes the importance of group goals, values, and interests over individual ones. It’s characterized by a strong sense of community, shared responsibility, and cooperation among members of a group or society. Collectivist cultures prioritize the needs of the group, family, or community above the desires of individuals. Collectivism is recognized as the most prominent cultural dimension (Morren and Grinstein, 2016). Collectivism stands in contrast to individualism, which places a greater emphasis on personal autonomy, self-expression, and individual goals. Some countries like China, Mexico, and Ecuador, India and Russia all tend to place much significance on the welfare of their in-group, while some western countries like UK, USA tend to regard individualism as their mainstream social values, by which, they see individuals’ excellency as superior to collective honor. However, it’s important to note that these terms represent cultural tendencies and are not mutually exclusive. Cultures can exhibit varying degrees of collectivist and individualist traits.

3.2 Classification of Culture-specific Words

Culture-loaded words can be divided into four categories, including material culture-loaded terms, social culture-loaded terms, religious culture-loaded terms, and linguistic culture-loaded terms (Qiu Jin,2022) as Nida (1945:196) divided the cultural issues involved in translation practice into five types (1) material culture, (2) religious culture, (3) ecological culture, (4) linguistic culture, and (5) social culture.

Material culture refers to the physical objects, artifacts, and tangible items that are created, used, and valued by a particular culture or society. These objects reflect the beliefs, values, practices, and technologies of a community and provide insights into its way of life; Religious culture refers to the set of beliefs, practices, rituals, symbols, values, and behaviors that characterize a particular religious group or community. It encompasses the ways in which religion influences various aspects of individuals' lives and societies as a whole. Religious culture plays a significant role in shaping identity, traditions, social interactions, and even political and economic systems; Ecological culture, also known as environmental culture or eco-culture, refers to a set of values, beliefs, behaviors, and practices that promote environmental sustainability, ecological awareness, and a harmonious relationship between humans and the natural world. This cultural perspective emphasizes the importance of preserving ecosystems, conserving resources, and mitigating environmental impacts to ensure a healthy planet for current and future generations; Linguistic culture, also known as language culture or language-related culture, refers to the ways in which language shapes and reflects the values, beliefs, behaviors, and social norms of a particular community or society. Language is not just a means of communication; it carries within it the history, traditions, and identity of a group of people. Linguistic culture encompasses a wide range of aspects, including language structure, idioms, expressions, dialects, and the social interactions surrounding language use; Social culture, also referred to as social or sociocultural norms, encompasses the shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, customs, values, and interactions that shape the ways individuals and groups function within a society. It encompasses various aspects of human life, including social norms, family structures, gender roles, communication styles, social hierarchies, cultural traditions, dress and appearance, social taboos, and norms of etiquette.

Accordingly, Chen (2010) divided culture-specific words into the following two categories: absolute sense-vacant culture-specific words and semi sense-vacant culture-specific words. Absolute sense-vacant culture-specific words refers to some terms that lacks any equivalent words in another culture, like Yin Yang, Jin Luo and so on in Traditional Chinese medicine. Twelve solar terms is confusing for foreigners also. Because of different lifestyles and ethnic culture, such absolute sense-vacant culture-specific words can be found everywhere. Another category, that is, semi sense-vacant culture-specific words, means expressions whose concept are partially equivalent in the culture of another language. This category of culture-specific words are numerous also. They can be further classified into : culture-specific words with multiple meanings, culture-specific words with cultural connotations, and pragmatic-sense non-equivalent culture-specific words (Chen,2010) . For example, in kinship, America tends to use the word “cousin” to refer to all kids of your aunts and uncles, while in Chinese, “表弟”(biǎo dì),“堂弟”(táng dì), “表妹”(biǎo mèi), “堂妹”(táng mèi) are used to refer to cousin with different sex and kinship. Therefore, English word “cousin” is a culture-specific word with multiple meanings. As for culture-specific words with cultural connotations, they are words that have similar literal meaning, but with different connotations. In other words, they contain different implied meanings. Word of colors can be taken as a best example for this. The color “red” implies festivity and passion, while in Western cultures, it connotes blood and conflict, with completely different implied meanings. “Peasant” in Chinese means farmers, while in Oxford Dictionary, it is a derogatory term, referring to a usually uneducated person of

low social status. In addition, pragmatic-sense non-equivalent culture-specific words refer to words or terms from one language and culture that do not have a direct, equivalent translation in another language and culture due to differences in pragmatic, contextual, or cultural meanings. These words often carry cultural nuances and implications that are difficult to capture accurately in translation. For instance, the sentence “Have you had your meal?” are usually used by Chinese people to greet others, to show your care for them, and not necessarily anticipate to know whether they have really had their meal or not. But in other cultures, no such pragmatic meaning are contained in the sentence. So they are pragmatic-sense non-equivalent culture-specific words in Chinese.

The classification of culture-specific items is multifarious. Newmark (1988:95-102) has also distinguished five main categories of culture-specific items, and they are (1) ecology, (2) material culture, (3) social culture, (4) organizations, customs, activities, procedures, and concepts, and (5) gestures and habits. These groupings can also be divided further into more sub-categories.

From previous studies, we found that culture-specific words has attracted a lot of attention from distinguished scholars. People become more and more aware of their origin, variations and applications in all kinds of contexts.

3.3 Reasons for Studying Culture in Words

Why should we study different cultures when doing interpretation? Studying cultures is of paramount importance for interpreting culture-specific words for the following reasons: Firstly, cultural nuances in language. Languages are deeply intertwined with the cultures they belong to. Certain words, phrases, idioms, and expressions have cultural connotations and nuances that may not directly translate into another language. Without cultural context, the true meaning and intention behind a statement can be lost in translation. Secondly, avoiding misinterpretation. A lack of cultural awareness can lead to misinterpretations, where a translated message might be taken in a way that the original speaker did not intend. Understanding cultural norms helps interpreters accurately convey the intended message without distorting its meaning. Thirdly, Respect and Sensitivity. Different cultures have varying levels of formality, politeness, and respect built into their languages. Knowing when to use honorifics, formal language, or informal language is crucial for maintaining respect and rapport between parties during interpretation. Fourthly, cultural references and context. Cultural references, historical events, and pop culture can greatly affect communication. Without understanding these references, an interpreter might struggle to explain or translate them, leading to confusion or miscommunication. Fifthly, nonverbal communication. Gestures, body language, and facial expressions carry cultural significance. An interpreter who is familiar with the cultural context can provide a more accurate representation of the speaker’s intended message by incorporating these nonverbal cues. Sixthly, building trust and rapport. When an interpreter demonstrates an understanding of a person’s culture, it can foster trust and rapport. People are more likely to feel understood and valued when their cultural nuances are acknowledged and respected. Seventhly, cultural mediation. In situations where there are cultural misunderstandings or conflicts, interpreters with cultural knowledge can mediate and provide explanations to help bridge gaps and promote understanding.

In summary, just as Newmark (1988) asserted, culture was a focal facet of the ways of life of a people, influencing how they communicate within their communities, including their use of language to express themselves based on their cultural practices. Culture is, therefore, a significant factor in shaping one's way of life. In essence, successful interpretation involves more than just translating words; it's about conveying the intended meaning while considering the cultural context. The cultural ethics, including religious value, moral value, aesthetic value, scientific value, utilitarian value, are deep-rooted in people's mind and are manifested by the form of language. Without a solid grasp of the cultural aspects, an interpreter may inadvertently alter or misrepresent the message being conveyed. Therefore, cultural sensitivity and awareness are essential skills for any interpreter working across languages and cultures.

3.4 Challenges of Interpreting Culture-Specific Terms

Culture-specific words can pose challenges especially in a globalized world where businesses often operate across diverse cultural contexts because they may not have direct counterparts in other languages or cultures. Misunderstandings related to culture-loaded words can lead to miscommunication, strained relationships, and even business failures. Here are some challenges interpreters face when interpreting culture-loaded words. Firstly, culture-loaded words often have nuanced meanings that may not directly translate across languages. A word in one language might encompass multiple concepts or emotions that aren't easily conveyed in another language. This can lead to misinterpretations and misunderstandings. Secondly, different cultures attach varying levels of sensitivity to certain words or phrases. A term that's considered neutral or positive in one culture might be offensive or inappropriate in another. This requires communicators to be aware of potential cultural sensitivities and choose their words carefully. Thirdly, idiomatic expressions and metaphors are deeply rooted in cultural contexts. Using these expressions in business communication can be confusing if they aren't familiar to all parties involved. They may be interpreted literally, leading to miscommunication. Fourthly, culture-loaded words aren't just about spoken or written language; they extend to non-verbal cues, gestures, and body language. Different cultures ascribe different meanings to these cues, which can lead to miscommunication or misinterpretation. Fifthly, some cultures rely more on context to convey meaning, while others prefer explicit communication. Culture-loaded words might require additional context or explanation in certain cultural contexts to be properly understood. Sixthly, language and cultural norms evolve over time. A word that once carried a specific meaning might shift in connotation, leading to misinterpretation if not kept up-to-date with cultural trends.

To overcome these challenges, it's essential to prioritize cross-cultural communication skills and enhance interpreter's cross-cultural competence. This involves cultural awareness, active listening, asking for clarification, providing context, using clear and simple language, and, when feasible, working with native speakers or cultural experts to ensure accurate communication.

4.0 COMPLEXITY AND RULES OF CROSS-CULTURAL BUSINESS NEGOTIATION

4.1 The Complexity of Cross-cultural Business Negotiation

Cross-cultural business negotiations refer to the process of conducting business negotiations between individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds. Cross-cultural business negotiations are characterized by cultural diversity, linguistic barriers, different laws and regulations, international relations, cultural sensitivity, and international cooperation. In this globalized world, businesses often operate across borders, thus effective negotiation with partners, clients, suppliers, or investors from diverse cultural contexts becomes crucial for successful execution of transactions. However, due to different cultural backgrounds, there are a lot of challenges that may arise during the whole process.

Firstly, lack of cultural awareness. Negotiators may come from completely different cultures, having their own set of social norms, values and rituals that are contradictory to their counterparts. Without enough preparation in the pre-negotiation phase, the negotiation may turn out to be unsatisfactory in the end. In order to overcome this, negotiators need to enhance their culture awareness and be aware of the cultural norms, values, and communication styles of both their own culture and the culture of the other party. Understanding how cultural factors impact negotiation dynamics is crucial. Cultural factors can significantly influence the way negotiations unfold, the strategies that are effective, and the overall outcomes.

Secondly, requirement of communication adaptation. Different cultures have their preferred way of communication. Negotiators must adapt their communication styles, language, and approach to suit the preferences and norms of their counterparts, especially when dealing with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. It recognizes that effective communication is not just about conveying information but also about understanding and being understood within the cultural context of the communication partners in order to bridge cultural gaps. This might involve adjusting language, such as using terminology familiar to both parties' tone, and nonverbal cues like gestures, facial expressions, and body language to align with the preferences of other cultures.

Thirdly, different levels of hierarchy in decision-making. Cultural differences in decision-making processes can impact negotiation outcomes. In hierarchical cultures, where people place a strong emphasis on hierarchy, authority figures hold considerable decision-making power. Here, negotiation processes often involve seeking approval from higher-ups before final decisions are made. They respect authority, formality, indirect communication. On the contrary, egalitarian cultures tend to emphasize consensus. They stress more equal distribution of power in decision-making. Negotiations tend to involve a consensus-driven approach where input is sought from various team members. Therefore, they pursue equality in communication, direct communication, and inclusivity, that is, they enough open participation from all team members, decision efficiency. Different levels of hierarchy in decision-making may call for different negotiation strategies.

Lastly, some ethical considerations. Cultural variations in ethical standards can affect negotiation tactics. Ethical considerations are of paramount importance in international business negotiations due to the diverse cultural, legal, and economic contexts involved.

Upholding ethical principles fosters trust, promotes fair dealings, and enhances long-term relationships between parties from different countries, but dishonoring other culture's ethical principle would possible result in hostility in the process. It's important to understand what is considered ethical in both cultures and navigate differences accordingly.

4.2 Rules for Cross-Cultural Business Negotiation

Cross-cultural business negotiations require a heightened level of cultural sensitivity and adaptability due to the diverse cultural backgrounds of the parties involved. Here are some rules to follow when engaging in cross-cultural business negotiations:

Firstly, respect and empathy. This means showing respect for the other party's cultural perspectives and demonstrating empathy. Understand that what might be considered a common practice in your culture could be perceived differently in theirs. Examine problems from other's perspective, and avoid making judgments based on your own cultural lens. Take the time to educate yourself about the other party's culture. Learn about their customs, traditions, communication styles, and business practices. Approach the negotiation with an open mind. Be willing to set aside assumptions or biases based on your own cultural background. This attitude allows you to see the situation from the other party's viewpoint and appreciate the differences. Refrain from making broad generalizations about the other culture. People within a culture can have diverse viewpoints and behaviors, so treat each negotiation partner as an individual. Demonstrating these qualities not only builds a positive atmosphere for negotiation but also fosters trust and enhances the likelihood of reaching mutually beneficial agreements.

Secondly, cultural research and awareness. Thoroughly research and understand the cultural norms, values, communication styles, and business practices of the other party's culture. Before entering into negotiations, conduct thorough research on the cultural background of the other party. Gather information about their country's history, traditions, customs, religion, and social norms. Explore how communication is typically conducted in the other culture. Understand whether communication is more direct or indirect, whether formal or informal language is preferred, and how nonverbal cues are interpreted. Familiarize yourself with business etiquette specific to the other culture. This includes practices related to greetings, business card exchange, gift-giving, and appropriate levels of formality in both communication and attire. Identify the cultural values that hold importance in the other culture. For example, some cultures prioritize long-term relationships and trust-building, while others focus on efficiency and direct results. Familiarize yourself with cultural dimensions like those proposed by Geert Hofstede, such as individualism vs. collectivism, power distance, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term vs. short-term orientation. These dimensions provide insights into cultural tendencies.

Thirdly, effective communication. Focus on clear and concise communication. Be mindful of language barriers and avoid using idiomatic expressions, jargon, or ambiguous terms that could lead to misunderstanding. Choose words carefully and confirm mutual understanding. Opt for simple and concise language, avoiding complex sentence structures and vocabulary. This helps ensure that your message is easily understood, especially if English or a second language is being used. Steer clear of slang, idiomatic expressions, and

cultural references that might not translate well or could be misinterpreted. Stick to universally understood terms and phrases. If interpretation is necessary, pause after making key points to allow interpreters or participants to catch up. This ensures that everyone is on the same page and reduces the risk of miscommunication. If possible, provide written materials in multiple languages or offer translations. This demonstrates your commitment to inclusivity and understanding participants' language needs. If you sense confusion or uncertainty, encourage participants to ask questions and seek clarification. Address ambiguities promptly to prevent misunderstandings from derailing the negotiation process. Remember that each negotiation situation is unique, and while these rules provide a general guideline, the specific cultural dynamics of the parties involved will ultimately shape the negotiation process. Adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and a willingness to learn are key to successful cross-cultural business negotiations.

5.0 INTERPRETATION STRATEGIES FOR CHINESE CULTURE-SPECIFIC TERMS

5.1 Transliteration

Transliteration is the process of converting text from one script or writing system into another. It involves representing the characters or symbols of one alphabet, script, or language into their approximate equivalents in another script. Transliteration is frequently used to translate culturally specific phrases or phenomena, and is particularly useful for translating names for people, places, things, concepts, trade names, etc. that have different cultural or ethnic connotations. Transliteration aims to retain the phonetic or visual aspects of the original text, rather than translating its meaning. It is commonly used to help people pronounce words or names from different languages or scripts that they might not be familiar with. Transliteration is particularly useful when there is no direct translation available or when preserving the original pronunciation is essential.

Transliteration is commonly employed in various fields such as academia and linguistics, travel and tourism, personal and business names, online and digital communication, cross-cultural communication. Transliteration facilitates cross-cultural communication, allowing people from different linguistic backgrounds to communicate more effectively.

Interpreting culture-loaded words through transliteration involves representing words or terms from one language's script into another using a similar phonetic structure, while attempting to preserve the cultural and contextual meaning of the original term. This process is particularly relevant for words that carry strong cultural connotations, nuances, or concepts that are not easily translatable into another language. By doing so, an interpreter can preserve the source language's pronunciation, or retain the cultural context. Some culture-loaded words encapsulate intricate emotions, beliefs, or traditions that are specific to a particular culture. Transliteration helps in transmitting these nuanced meanings, even if a direct translation might not fully capture them. Transliteration of culture-loaded words enhances cross-cultural communication by allowing people from different linguistic backgrounds to engage with and understand important cultural terms and concepts. And in international business and diplomatic contexts, transliteration ensures that titles, honorifics, and official terms are accurately represented and understood by various parties.

5.2 Literal Interpretation

Interpreting culture-loaded words through literal translation focuses on transferring the surface-level meaning of language from one form to another, often without considering the deeper cultural, contextual, or pragmatic aspects of communication. That's because some Chinese words have only referential meaning without specific reference context, and the translator can choose equivalent words in English to translate them. By this means, the culture implied in the source language can be preserved or even transmitted to the target language. Foreignization as a kind of translation strategy can be best applied to situations where there is no culturally equivalent terms in target language. Literal translation as a valid way for foreignization can be seen as an important translation technique and the effect of it can be tested by back-translation, that is, translating the target text into source text. If the translation turns out to be satisfactory, that means it passes the back-translation test. Newmark (1988: 68-69) stated that the prevailing orthodoxy is leading to the rejection of literal translation as a legitimate translation procedure... However, literal translation is correct and must not be avoided if it secures referential and pragmatic equivalence to the original.

However, while this approach can aid in conveying basic information, it may not always capture the full nuances, cultural context, or intended meaning behind the words. Literal interpretation can be seen as a way to preserve the denotative (literal) meaning of signs or symbols while potentially overlooking their connotative (cultural or associative) meanings. It aligns with formal equivalence by prioritizing the direct correspondence of words or phrases. While cognitive linguistics often emphasizes the importance of conceptual metaphors and cultural schemas, literal interpretation can be seen as a way to capture the basic cognitive concepts underlying language use, ignoring the culturally specific metaphors.

When doing literal interpretation for cross-cultural business negotiations, an interpreter should first familiarize himself with the context in which the culture-loaded words are being used. Understand the cultural, historical, and business context to ensure that the literal interpretation aligns with the overall message; then identify words or phrases in the target language that closely approximate the meaning of the culture-loaded words. Aim for words that capture the denotative meaning while considering the specific business context. One should strive for formal equivalence in the interpretation, maintaining the grammatical and structural integrity of the target language while ensuring the basic meaning of the culture-loaded term is retained; While focusing on literal interpretation, remember that the primary goal is effective communication. Ensure that your interpretation helps both parties understand the basic meaning without causing confusion. In summary, literal interpretation of culture-loaded words in business negotiations can aid in conveying basic meanings, but it should be complemented by cultural awareness and additional context. Striking a balance between literal interpretation and cultural understanding is crucial for successful cross-cultural communication and negotiation outcomes.

5.3 Sense-for-sense Interpretation

Sense-for-sense interpretation, also known as dynamic equivalence or functional translation, is an approach to translation that prioritizes conveying the overall meaning, intent, and impact of a message from one language to another, rather than adhering strictly to a word-for-word translation. Functional equivalence theory asserts that the primary goal

of translation is to produce an equivalent effect on the target audience as the original message had on the source audience and lexical equivalence is the basic embodiment of content equivalence. This approach acknowledges that languages and cultures differ, and a successful translation should prioritize achieving similar communicative functions. This approach is particularly valuable in cross-cultural business negotiations, where the focus is on ensuring that the intended message, nuances, and effects are accurately communicated despite linguistic and cultural differences. Sense-for-sense interpretation aims to convey the underlying concepts and cognitive associations of the source message in a way that resonates with the target audience's cognitive patterns.

Performing sense-for-sense interpretation of culture-specific words in cross-cultural business negotiations requires a nuanced approach that balances conveying the intended meaning while considering cultural sensitivities and business context. An qualified interpreter should first research the cultural significance and connotations of the culture-specific words in the source language and gain insights into the industry or business domain to ensure accurate interpretation. Then he should focus on capturing the core meaning and intent behind the culture-specific words, rather than just doing a literal interpretation. He should understand the target audience's cultural background and linguistic preferences, adapt the interpretation to resonate with the target audience's cultural norms and communication style. Next, an interpreter should be cautious of cultural nuances that could be misinterpreted or considered offensive in the target culture and modify the interpretation to avoid any potential misunderstandings. Be prepared to adapt interpretation approach based on the responses and feedback he receive during the negotiation.

Sense-for-sense interpretation for culture-specific words in cross-cultural business negotiations should be applied strategically when direct word-for-word translation would result in confusion or misinterpretation due to cultural or linguistic differences. Doing sense-for-sense interpretation can best exemplify the principle of Dynamic Equivalence proposed by Eugene Nida, as it involves rephrasing or restructuring the text in a way that produces an equivalent effect, or response, in the audience as the original text had on its source audience without formal restrictions from the source text. It focuses on conveying the essence, intent, and emotional impact of a message across languages and cultures. It recognizes that translation is not merely about substituting words, but about reproducing the meaning and communicative effect of the original text in a way that resonates with the target audience.

5.4 Combination of Different Strategies

Usually, it's not necessary to be confined to a certain interpretation strategy. Combining different interpretation strategies, such as what was mentioned above transliteration, literal interpretation, and sense-for-sense interpretation can be a powerful approach to handling the increasingly complexities of cross-cultural business negotiations. This hybrid strategy allows you to leverage the strengths of each approach while addressing their limitations.

When doing interpretation in cross-cultural business trade, employ literal interpretation for technical terms that have specific meanings in the source language and have equivalent terms in the target language, while using sense-for-sense interpretation to convey their broader implications in the target culture. Be sure to use sense-for-sense interpretation for

terms and idioms that are abundant in cultural connotations, while supplementing with transliteration or literal interpretation to make it clearer. Provide additional explanations if necessary to clarify the meaning and cultural context of sense-for-sense interpretations if possible. An interpreter can use sense-for-sense interpretation to capture the cultural implications in the original message and combine it with transliteration or literal interpretation for factual details and logistical information. Apply sense-for-sense interpretation to messages where emotional impact, persuasion, or negotiation tactics are crucial, and use literal interpretation for clear and precise communication.

Newmark (1988) disagrees with Gadamer's (1976) statement that no translation is as understandable as the original. Newmarks (1988:79) believes that many translations have been and are a good, simple introduction, a lead-in into the original and to write off as a "untranslatable" word whose meaning cannot be rendered literally and precisely by another word is absurd. We could always try to make use of some techniques such as componential analysis to separate the original words into four or five words. Therefore, culture-specific words are always translatable as long as you have adequate cultural awareness and make use of appropriate translation strategies. Besides the four interpretation strategies enlisted above, other advanced interpretation strategies include transference, naturalization, synonymy, transposition, modulation, recognized translation, compensation, reduction and expansion, paraphrasing, addition and so on. Due to limitation of words, this paper can not encapsulate them all. Also, remember that the choice of interpretation strategy or combination depends on the specific communication context, the cultural sensitivity required, and the negotiation goals. Adapt your approach to ensure that both parties understand and respond effectively to the messages being exchanged, creating a productive and harmonious cross-cultural negotiation environment.

6.0 INFLUENCING FACTORS OF INTERPRETATION STRATEGIES

Interpretation strategies play a significant role in influencing business negotiation dynamics. The way individuals interpret information, signals, and communication during negotiations can shape their understanding, decision-making, and ultimately the outcomes of the negotiation. Here are some influencing factors of interpretation strategies that can impact business negotiation dynamics:

Firstly, perception of information. Interpretation begins with the perception of information. People may interpret the same information differently based on their cognitive biases, cultural backgrounds, and personal experiences. For instance, a statement made by one party might be seen as a concession by one interpreter but as a sign of weakness by another. These differing interpretations can lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding, affecting the negotiation's progress.

Secondly, attribution bias. Interpretation strategies are influenced by attribution biases, where interpreters attribute specific motives or intentions to the actions of the other party. If the interpreter attributes positive intentions to the negotiator's actions, he or she may regard the negotiator's words as a symbol of trust and collaboration, and therefore, the interpreter would choose to convey connotations that would surely promote the negotiating process. Conversely, attributing negative intentions can lead to conveyance of hostility and adversarial behavior, which would hamper the negotiating efforts.

Thirdly, negotiation power dynamics. The relative power of each party can influence how they interpret various negotiation elements. The stronger party might interpret signals from the weaker party as signs of submission, while the weaker party might interpret them as attempts to build rapport.

In summary, interpretation strategies are a lens through which negotiators perceive and make sense of the negotiation process and the behavior of the other party. These strategies are shaped by cognitive, emotional, cultural, and contextual factors. Understanding these dynamics can help negotiators improve communication, manage expectations, and work toward mutually beneficial outcomes.

7.0 CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

In the realm of cross-cultural business negotiations, effective communication is the cornerstone of successful outcomes. The thesis delves into the intricate interplay between language, culture, and communication strategies, showing the strategy of how to interpret Chinese culture-specific words in cross-cultural business negotiations. By examining closely the definition, features and classification of culture-specific words, and features and challenges during of process of business negotiation, through an in-depth exploration of interpretation strategies, this thesis provides an comprehensive overview of interpretation of Chinese culture-loaded words in business negotiations so that interpreters are able to discern the complexity of cross-cultural business negotiations, take appropriate strategies when doing interpretation for cross-cultural negotiators.

China is a country with a long history and rich culture. With a history spanning thousands of years, China has cultivated a rich tapestry of traditions, philosophies, and artistic achievements that continue to influence the world today. From its ancient dynasties till its modern transformation, China's cultural heritage still resonates in various aspects of its society, including art, literature, philosophy, cuisine, and business practices. As China's global influence continues to expand, its cultural legacy remains a source of fascination and admiration. Acknowledging China's rich history and culture, and spreading them by appropriate interpretation of culture-loaded words is an effective way to keep them preserved and flourished. As Newmark (1988:10) points out that "translation is not only the transmission of knowledge and the creation of understanding, but also the transmission of culture." Recognizing the importance of Chinese culture-loaded words is not only a way to appreciate the past but also a recognition of the enduring impact it has on the present and the future. By studying the interpretation of Chinese culture-specific terms in cross-cultural negotiations, this thesis underscores the importance of striking a delicate balance between conveying accurate meaning and capturing cultural depth in business negotiation. In addition, we should bear in mind that the practice of identifying cultural variations embedded in words is not to aggravate cultural separation; on the contrary, by doing so, we mean to promote integration of different cultures in order to tackle cultural conflicts, mitigating misunderstandings and distrusts in business negotiations. Cultural separation is not our purpose, cultural integration is.

Furthermore, this thesis examines the interplay between interpretation and business negotiations, and sheds light on how the interpretation of Chinese culture-specific terms can influence the dynamics of cross-cultural negotiations. The result of the study can serve as a guidebook for interpretation practitioners to refer to when engaged in business

negotiations.

Nevertheless, while there are some reference values in this thesis, it goes without saying that there are also some limitations. Firstly, the thesis primarily centers on Chinese culture-specific terms, but because of cultural diversity, it might not encapsulate all the variations of all culture-loaded words within China. There surely are some features or classifications missing in the paper. The thesis would only try to capture some major ones or take some prominent examples to illustrate. Secondly, because of limited scope, the thesis primarily centers on Chinese culture-specific terms, potentially overlooking the complexities of other cultures and languages involved in cross-cultural negotiations. As in cross-cultural business negotiations, culture-loaded words of all parties matter the same. Thirdly, as for interpretation strategies, they can evolve over time due to shifts in cultural norms, linguistic trends, social norms, potentially altering their effectiveness. Also, the choice of interpretation strategies can be subjective most of the time, influenced by interpreters' individual perceptions, cultural biases, and linguistic expertise and what are proposed here cannot capture them all.

REFERENCES

- Chen, S., Mansor, N. S., Mooisan, C., & Abdullah, M. A. R. (2023). Examining Cultural Words Translation in Tourism Texts: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 14(2), 499-509.
- Chen, X. D. (2010). Classification and Translation of Culture-Loaded Words From the Perspective of Semantic Vacancy. *Journal of Qinghai Nationalities University (Education Science Edition)*, 30(06): 106-108.
- Chen Yiliang.(2023).*Study on Translation Strategies of Culture-loaded Words in Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out from the Perspective of Foreignization or Domestication*. (Master's thesis,Shanxi University of Finance&Economics,2023).
- Gadamer, H. G. . (1976). *On the scope and function of hermeneutics reflection*.
- Hurst, S. K. (2022). Prototypical words for core categories in French and English: Vocabulary as a window to culture. *Foreign Language Annals*, 55(4), 1063-1085.
- Morren, M., & Grinstein, A. (2016). Explaining environmental behavior across borders: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 47, 91-106.
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A Textbook of Translation*. Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall.
- Nida, E. (1945). Linguistics and ethnology in translation-problems. *Word*, 1(2), 194-208.
- Sun Lin, & Han Caihong. (2021). On the English Translation of Culture-Loaded Words in Folding Beijing from the Perspective of Eco-translatology. *Shanghai Journal of Translators*, (4), 90-94.
- Pratama, A. A., Ramadhan, T. B. L., Elawati, F. N., & Nugroho, R. A. (2021). Translation quality analysis of cultural words in translated tourism promotional text of central java. *JELTL* 6, 179.
- Qiu Jin. (2022).*On Howard Goldblatt's Translation of Culture-loaded Terms from the Perspective of Translator Behavior Criticism: A Case Study of The Moon Opera*. (Master's thesis,Guangdong University of Foreign Studies,2022).

- Song Hangling.(2022). *Translation Strategies of Culture-loaded Words from the Perspective of Translator Behavior Criticism: A Case Study of To Live*. (Master's thesis,Beijing Foreign Studies University,2022).
- Youssef, S. S., & Albarakati, M. A. (2023). Strategies for Translating Culture-Specific Metaphor on Taboos in Abdo Khal's "Throwing Sparks". *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 13(6), 1403-1412.