

# Translation of English and Chinese Idioms from the Perspective of Cultural Differences

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**Abstract:** With the increasingly frequent exchanges between countries, personnel interaction is increasingly close the rapid spread of culture. Language, as a communication carrier, is indispensable, and idioms are a very important part of the language. Idioms are a refined form of language produced in people's long-term production and life. They are deeply rooted in the national culture and have become a difficulty in translation due to their high cultural content. As the language with the largest number of speakers in the world, English and Chinese idioms have their own cultural differences and are indispensable cultural wealth in the world. In order to ensure that the original text and the translation can complement each other in content and form, it is necessary to master the translation of idioms. The purpose of this paper is to study the perspective of cultural differences between English and Chinese idioms translation, this paper analyzes the method and skill of English and Chinese idioms translation, adopt the method of research experiment analyzed the influence of cultural differences on English and Chinese idioms translation, in the process of English and Chinese idioms translation now have some problems, for example, analysis, and puts forward some Suggestions. It is hoped that the translation of idioms can be considered from the perspective of cultural differences and the principle of translation should be followed to make the translation not only convey the meaning but also convey the essence to the greatest extent. According to the survey data, 80% of the scholars not only need a certain cultural basis as the background, but also show a kind of cultural difference, which has an important impact on the translation of English and Chinese idioms. Only by understanding the differences and unity of English and Chinese culture in a practical way, can idiom translation become more fluent in a real sense.

**Keywords:** English-Chinese Translation, Cultural Differences, Translation Studies, English-Chinese idiom Translation

## 1. Introduction

In our daily life, clothing, food, housing, and transportation, nothing is inseparable from the communication and expression of language. As such, language has become a cultural skill. In daily life, language plays an irreplaceable role, and the corresponding culture also plays an extremely important auxiliary role. It can be seen that there is an inseparable connection and constraint between cultural customs and language expressions. At present, cultural integration has attracted widespread attention. The most important reason is that linguists and language educators have become increasingly aware that language is inseparable from culture. Language is not only a carrier of culture, but also cultural component. Therefore, in the process of language learning, students must not only have a precise understanding and grasp of the expression and connotation of language in the text, but also have to understand the differences and similarities between the two cultures, and more importantly, the two cultures Sex has a comprehensive understanding and promotes prosperity and development between the two countries.

There are large differences in the expression of idioms among different nations and countries, and it is often difficult to achieve the same effect in translation. This is due to cultural differences. These cultural differences are mainly formed by differences in ways of thinking, geographical environment, religious beliefs, history and culture, etc. [1]. It is precisely because Chinese and Western cultures are very different, and idioms are a carrier of culture. Idiom translation has always been a difficult point in the translation process. In the translation process, it is often necessary to take into account the national culture and the acceptability of the readers. The translation effect requires expressiveness and the unity

of the translation and the original form and content, so that different national cultures can communicate well.

Scholars such as Tzou Y Z found that this study examined whether translation / interpretation training would lead to a reliance on a vertical translation strategy, that is, understanding the source language text before reformulating the information. Translation / interpretation and untrained bilingual students are given an idiom translation judgment task with literal translation (form and meaning) or parable (meaning only). Dependent measures include the time required to understand the first sentence, and the accuracy and speed of determining whether the second sentence is the first sentence. There was no difference in the speed of reading the first sentence between the two groups, but the translation verification time differed by the group and the type of translation: untrained bilinguals were significantly faster than metaphors in verifying direct translations, while trained bilinguals The speed is the same in class translation. The pattern of the research results is consistent with a view that translation training will promote the processing of meaning before re-developing or vertical translation strategies [2]. Ailan D and other scholars explored the characteristics and translation methods of English translation of movie titles based on the application of Peter Newmark's translation theory to the translation of movie titles based on the aesthetic expectations of Chinese audiences. The four main translation methods of literal translation, transliteration, free translation, semantic translation and / or communicative translation are introduced in detail, and the translation strategies of Hong Kong and Taiwan movie titles are introduced in detail with examples [3].

The rapid economic development has accelerated the pace of Chinese people going abroad, but the language of going abroad is a problem that must be solved. Today's internationally popular language is English. Failure to understand the correspondence between idioms in different cultures will inevitably affect communication. This article mainly uses big data analysis methods, using surveying, interviewing and statistics techniques, and uses English-speaking countries as the research object. This article selects the translation of English and Chinese idioms between English and Chinese-speaking countries, that is, China. Investigate and analyze the role played by idiom translation with research and cultural differences; conduct actual investigations on the specific performance of cultural differences on idiom translation, collect experimental data, analyze and count experimental data. Experimental data show that scholars need a certain cultural foundation as their background for the study of English-Chinese idiom translation. At the same time, it also shows a cultural difference, and cultural differences have an important impact on English-Chinese idiom translation.

## 2. Proposed Method

### 2.1. Cultural Differences between English and Chinese

#### (1) Differences in geographical environment

As the saying goes, one side supports water and soil to support one person. Geographical environment plays a vital role in people's lives. It shapes the culture that is closely related to daily life. Cultures in different regions have different characteristics and the development of their idioms will also there are differences. Britain is an island country. Due to the specific geographical factors surrounding the sea, the British people's life is closely related to the sea, and a lot of sea-related idioms have been produced [4]. For example, "coldfish" is used by the British to describe a person with a hard heart. Because the British have a developed maritime industry, things related to the sea will have an impact on the lives of the British, thus generating such idioms that are closely related to sea life. . Unlike the British, because the Han nationality mainly lives on the Asian continent, people's lives are mainly related to land. Such as "falling roots", "pumping seedlings to promote", "spending money like soil", etc., are all such idioms produced by farming and working people using experience for their lives [5]. In terms of geographical climate, China is located in the Eurasian continent. The monsoon climate is significant, with southeast winds prevailing in spring and northwest winds prevailing in winter, while Britain has a temperate maritime climate with westerly winds. Therefore, the English and Chinese understandings of "East Wind" and "West Wind" are quite different. It indicates the coming of spring. In Chinese culture, the "spring wind" is the "east wind", such as "the east wind blows the Qianshan green, and the spring rain sprinkles everything in Vientiane." In British culture, "spring wind" means "westerly wind", as in Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind", "the west wind blows the horn of spring, so that the green and scent are filled with the earth, let them run with the westerly wind. Footprints go around. "

### (2) Differences in religious beliefs

Religious belief is an important part of social culture, and it is the embodiment of people's spiritual life. It has important meaning in social life, and its influence is also obviously reflected in language. Many British and Americans believe in Christianity, and often use "God" in their idioms, such as "Oh, myGod" [6]. In addition, there are many things in the Bible, either characters or place names or allusions that have been evolved into idioms, such as "God helps those who help themselves." "Straw" is from the "Brick without Straw" story recorded in the Bible. Religious beliefs in China are mainly Buddhism and Taoism. In ancient China, from emperors and nobles to ordinary people, they used to burn incense in temples to worship Buddha. Even now, many people have the habit of watching Buddha burn incense. In search of immortal art, some ancient emperors once highly praised Taoism, which shows that religion has a profound influence on the Han people. There are many idioms related to Buddhism and Taoism, such as "send flowers to become Buddha", "choose incense to burn incense", "do not burn incense at leisure, hold Buddha feet temporarily", "Dao Gao Mo Gao", etc. [7].

### (3) Differences in historical development

The impact of historical events and excellent literary works on people's daily life is profound. Historical figures, events, or representative figures portrayed in literary works will be reflected in idioms after being recognized by people. Allusions and idioms in English are mainly derived from Greek and Roman myths and some famous literary works. This is mainly because British and American cultures are deeply influenced by Greek and Roman cultures [8]. For example, "Achilles' heel" means Achilles' fetters translated as "the only lethal weakness". This idiom comes from the Greek epic Iliad. Achilles is a famous Greek hero. After his birth, he was hanged by his mother and immersed in the Styx, so his entire body was impeccable [9]. However, since his mother supported his heels with his hands, it was not immersed in the water, so it became the only injured or even fatal weakness. If you do not understand the connotation of these idioms and only look at the literal meaning, they will often misunderstand the true meaning of these idioms. Similarly, a considerable part of the idioms of the Han nationality comes from historical and literary allusions, such as the well-known "three tanners over Zhuge Liang." Zhuge Liang is a symbol of wisdom in the minds of the Han people, but for foreigners unfamiliar with Chinese history, they may not understand the meaning of this idiom.

### (4) Differences in customs and culture

Because the living habits and thinking modes of the two ethnic groups are different, the customs and habits are also different, which is also reflected in idioms. For example, dogs are common animals in the lives of both nations, and they also have the habit of raising dogs, but their attitudes towards dogs are quite different [10]. "Dog" in Chinese is a derogatory term, and idioms related to "dog", such as "fox friend", "wolf heart dog lung", "dog eyes look at people low" and so on, all have contempt, and the British and American people regard dogs as praisers. In that case, dogs are considered to be the most faithful companions of human beings, and dogs are used as a metaphor for human beings [11]. Such as a luckydog translated as a lucky child. Therefore, the differences in customs are also one of the main reasons for the differences in their idioms. In addition, there is a big difference between English and Chinese in understanding the color. In English, "blue" means "blue-gray; sad, melancholic"; in Chinese, "blue" means clean and calm, referring to the colors of the sky and the ocean.

### (5) Differences in the way of thinking

English and Chinese are typical Eastern and Western thinking, and the translation methods of English and Chinese idioms will be different accordingly. This is mainly reflected in grammar. Western conversation habits put adverbials at the end. When translating, you need to adjust English to the correct word order to facilitate translation. There are many tenses in English, and the forms are relatively fixed, while Chinese tenses are often not obvious and can be omitted. In terms of vocabulary, Chinese vocabulary is relatively vague, while English vocabulary is relatively fixed. English vocabulary has multiple forms, singular and plural, past tense, etc., and there are certain rules for vocabulary changes to follow. It is precisely because of such different ways of thinking that they cause obstacles or even jokes in translation of idioms, such as the word "lover". Those who do not understand the differences in thinking modes may be translated as "love", but in fact the British think that lover means mistress. Although they are all lovers, the actual meaning is very different. If you want to describe your spouse, you can use husband as the husband or wife as the wife; frience as fiance or fiancée as fiancée. In short, there is a close relationship between language and culture [12]. English and Chinese idioms should not only be understood literally, but should really understand the meaning of idioms after understanding the cultural differences behind them. Therefore, learners should carefully

understand the differences between different cultures in order to better learn and use English.

## **2.2 Common Translation Methods of English and Chinese Idioms**

### (1) Literal translation

Literal translation is the translation of idioms according to the literal meaning of idioms. The characteristic of idioms is that their overall meaning is not the sum of the meanings of the constituent words. Such idioms are basically culturally and linguistically significant Equivalent, although this literal translation method may not be in line with the nature of idioms, those idioms with strong cultural flavors and prominent metaphorical images often have unexpected effects by using this translation method [13]. The proper use of literal translation can not only express the image and meaning of the original text, but also make people feel fresh. For example, "all roads lead to Rome" is often translated as "all roads lead to Rome", thus gradually becoming familiar. Another example is "crocodile tears" translated into "crocodile tears", "armed to teeth" translated into "armed to teeth" and so on [14]. Literal translation is a common method of idiom translation, but the reader's understanding should be considered in the process of translation in this way to avoid clumsiness.

### (2) Free Translation

Due to the differences between English and Chinese idioms in many aspects, most of them have their own national characteristics. For example, "A new broom sweeps clean" in English idiom cannot be directly translated as "new broom sweeps clean." People are accustomed to paraphrase it as "three fires for the new officer." If it is literally translated as "cats have nine lives," the Chinese may be confused and confused, so they have to be interpreted as "the Ji people have their own lives" [15]. In this way, the mystery of the numbers "nine" and "cat" in English cannot be effectively reflected in Chinese translation. Although free translation is often difficult to retain the cultural connotation of the original text, and it is difficult to equalize the semantics and connotation of the original text, free translation is a more flexible method of idiom translation, so it is widely used in idiom translation.

### (3) Concurrent usage

The concurrent usage is a translation method combining literal translation and free translation [16]. Some English and Chinese idioms have strong cultural marks. If you want to express the meaning of the original text to the greatest extent, and retain the national cultural characteristics of the original text as much as possible, it is often impossible to achieve simple literal or free translation. At this time, we can consider the combination of literal translation and free translation. Although the translation may not be as concise as the original, it can make up for the shortcomings that literal translation cannot express meaning and free translation does not convey the spirit [17]. For example, "Achille's heel" can be translated into "Achilles heel" by literal translation, which cannot be understood by people who do not understand Greek mythology. If free translation is added on the basis of literal translation, its meaning can be well expressed, which can be translated as "the Achilles' heel, the fatal weakness".

### (4) Raising method

Many English idioms are derived from historical allusions, have a strong national color and seemingly simple structures, but cannot be directly understood and translated literally. At this time, literal translation and annotation are needed [18-20]. For example, if "as fair as Helen" is literally translated as "beautiful as Helen", Chinese readers who do not understand Greek mythology will be curious "Who is Helen?" "How beautiful is it?" It is a famous beauty in Greek mythology, so readers can easily understand it. In the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the translation of political terms was annotated with literal translation, and the "Belt and Road" initiative was annotated [21]. If you add a note to "The Belt and Road Initiative", the interpretation is "It refers to the Silk Road Economic and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative", so that Westerners can clearly understand the "Belt and Road" It refers to the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and "21st Century Maritime Silk Road", which helps readers understand the political and economic strategy of socialism with Chinese characteristics [22]. The above methods are commonly used in the translation of English and Chinese idioms. The process generally follows the following process. As shown in Figure 1.

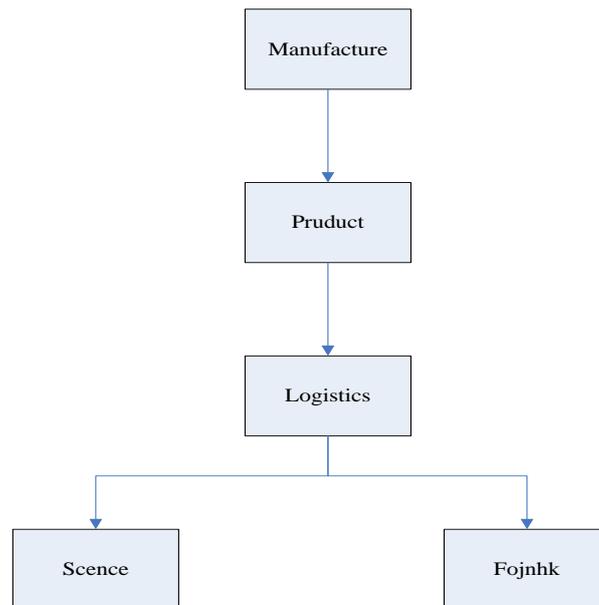


Figure 1: Steps of English Chinese Translation

### 3. Experiments

#### 3.1 Experimental Setup

##### (1) Overview of the experiment

In this paper, we study the perspective of cultural differences between English and Chinese idioms translation studies, this paper adopts the method of big data analysis, using techniques such as investigation, interview and statistics, in both Britain and America universities graduate students and Chinese university graduate student interview investigation, the study of English and Chinese idioms translation under different cultural perspective, to investigate the manifestation of the cultural differences in the actual experiment, experiment data collection, analysis and statistics.

##### (2) Experimental steps

1) A questionnaire survey was conducted on a number of Chinese graduate students randomly selected from a British university. Based on their understanding of foreign cultures and the influence of cultural differences in the process of english-chinese translation; Ask whether these influences conflict with their study, life, thoughts, etc.; Ask the students whether their culture, customs and habits have anything in common. Question the views on english-chinese translation studies from the perspective of cultural differences.

2) Collect, statistic and analyze the questionnaires, and analyze the understanding of English and Chinese culture; analyze the influence of cultural difference on english-chinese translation; Analyze whether there is any conflict with their study, life and thoughts; Analyze their views on english-chinese translation studies from the perspective of cultural differences.

3) Discuss and summarize the data analysis strictly, and discuss the authenticity, reliability and rigor of the results; discuss whether cultural difference has significant influence on english-chinese translation; this paper discusses how to adapt english-chinese translation to cultural differences. Finally, this paper summarizes some problems existing in the translation of English and Chinese idioms, and puts forward some Suggestions and measures.

##### (3) Matters needing attention

1) The content of the questionnaire should be 1) concise and fluent. When a problem is transferred to another problem, pay attention to the logical relationship, pay attention to the accuracy of words, and increase the level of difficulty from easy to difficult.

2) relevant consultation and comparison should be conducted between the two cultures, the accuracy of the test questions should be paid attention to to prevent mistakes and the consistency of the

two questionnaires; Analyze and summarize any problems that may exist; To check whether the contents, order and words of the questionnaire are wrong; To delete the two countries culture in english-chinese translation studies have no significance.

3) The survey objects must be foreign students rather than domestic students, so the survey objects of the two countries should be randomly selected and the number should be equal.

4) Classify and summarize the survey data and the analysis results, use relevant statistical algorithms to summarize, and use data simulation to generate mathematical text for analysis and comparison.

5) Do computer data processing software programming and programming testing well, analyze the data results obtained and require backup files.

6) Carry out reasonable derivation and analysis on the basis of real-time data, pay attention to the authenticity and validity of the results, conduct analysis with network big data, and summarize all conclusions required by the experiment.

#### 4. Discussion

##### 4.1 Research and Analysis of Investigation Status

(1) A random survey was conducted on 90 Chinese graduate students in A British university. 30 graduate students in each grade were randomly selected from three grades. The randomly selected graduate students were asked about their understanding of British culture, and the test questions were given to test the translation of English into English. At the same time, a random survey was conducted on 90 British graduate students from B university in China, and 30 students from each grade were randomly selected from three grades. The randomly selected graduate students were asked about their understanding of Chinese culture and given test questions to test the chinese-english translation of Chinese students. Usually, the higher the grade, the longer the life in other countries, the smaller the cultural differences. The analysis shows that the overall accuracy of Chinese students is slightly higher than that of British students, and the higher the grade, the higher the accuracy. The experimental data of the specific survey are shown in table 1 and figure 2, from which it can be seen that cultural differences play an important role in english-chinese translation.

Table 1: Pass number of Postgraduates

	First-year graduate student	Second-year graduate student	Third-year graduate student	Total number
Chinese students of college A	16	20	28	64
British students of college B	14	19	25	58

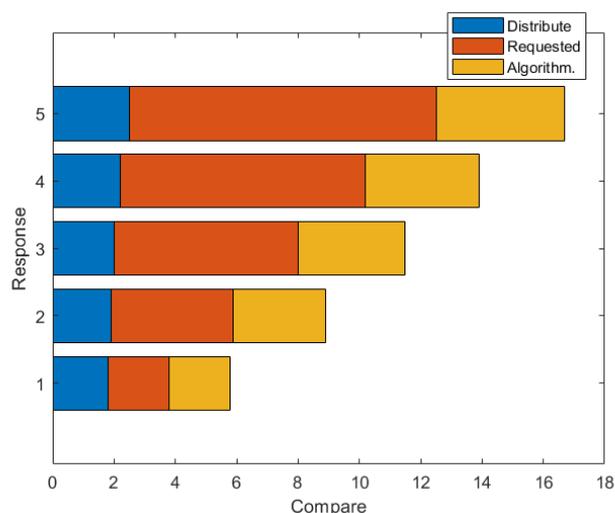


Figure 2: Pass rate of Postgraduates

(2) This paper explores the factors of cultural differences that affect the translation of English and Chinese idioms, which mainly include geographical environment, historical development, religious beliefs, customs and cultures. By asking the respondents about the understanding of the cultural differences between English and Chinese, it is found that the students who really understand the cultural differences between English and Chinese have a higher accuracy of translation. However, the understanding of English Chinese idiom translation in school A is slightly higher than that in school B. Chinese students have a better understanding of British culture, which is related to the fact that Chinese is more difficult to understand than English. Students can learn about culture by teaching and reading relevant historical books, listening to relevant lectures and browsing cultural magazines. Overseas students can actually contact the original idioms and practice them. Use these accumulated skills for cross-cultural communication. The study found that 180 students from two universities were interviewed to find out if they knew the local culture. The total number of students who knew English and Chinese culture had better test scores. It can be seen that it is very important to study the translation of English and Chinese idioms and to understand the corresponding cultural differences. The survey data are shown in Table 2 and figure 3.

Table 2: Data on cultural understanding

	Chinese students of college A	British students of college B
Good knowledge of British and Chinese culture	64	60
General knowledge of British and Chinese culture	21	19
Do not understand British and Chinese culture	5	11

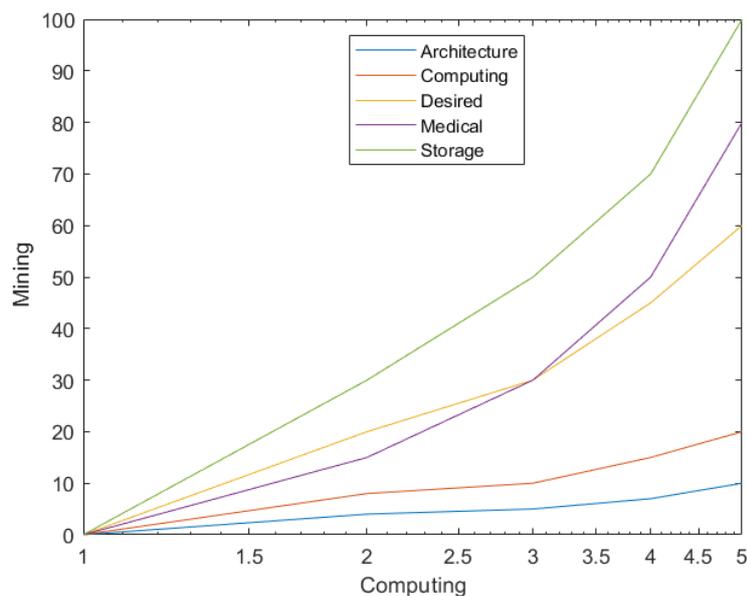


Figure 3: Fraction and Cultural understanding relations

#### 4.2 Discussing the Results of Cultural Differences on English-Chinese Translation Studies

(1) To explore the influence factors of the cultural differences between English and Chinese idioms translation between English and Chinese cultural differences mainly include geographical environment, historical development, religious beliefs, customs and culture that respects, by asking respondents to a better understanding of cultural differences between English and Chinese, situation, found that real understanding of the cultural differences between English and Chinese, classmate, the higher the accuracy of the translation. As for the understanding of English and Chinese idiom translation, school A is slightly higher than school B. Chinese students have A better grasp of British culture, which has something to do with the fact that Chinese is more difficult to understand than English. Students can learn about culture from teachers' lectures, reading history books or listening to

relevant lectures and browsing cultural magazines. Students studying abroad can actually get in touch with original idioms and practice them. Make use of these accumulated skills for cross-cultural communication. The study found that a total of 180 students from the two universities were interviewed to ask whether they knew the local culture. It can be seen that it is very important to understand the cultural differences in the translation of English and Chinese idioms. The survey data are shown in table 2 and figure 3.

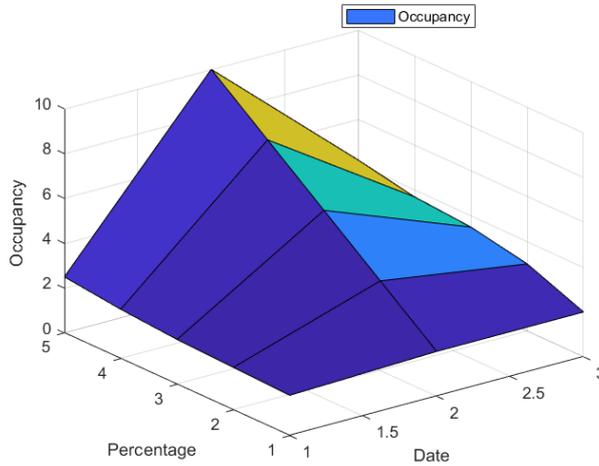


Figure 4: Idioms affect life

(2) From a cultural perspective. The data show that few people believe that culture has nothing to do with the translation of English and Chinese idioms, and that culture has little influence on the translation. By observing the effect of the two cultures on the translation of English and Chinese idioms, it is found that 47% of the students believe that British culture plays a greater role in the translation of English and Chinese idioms, while 50% believe that Chinese culture plays a greater role in the translation of English and Chinese idioms, while only 3% believe that Chinese culture has no role in the translation of English and Chinese idioms. Cultural differences are of great value to the study of English and Chinese idioms. Therefore, it is very important to understand and use cultural differences, objectively view the current situation of learning a foreign language as a communication tool, view the cultures of various countries in a diversified way, and respect the traditional culture. The survey data are shown in figure 5.

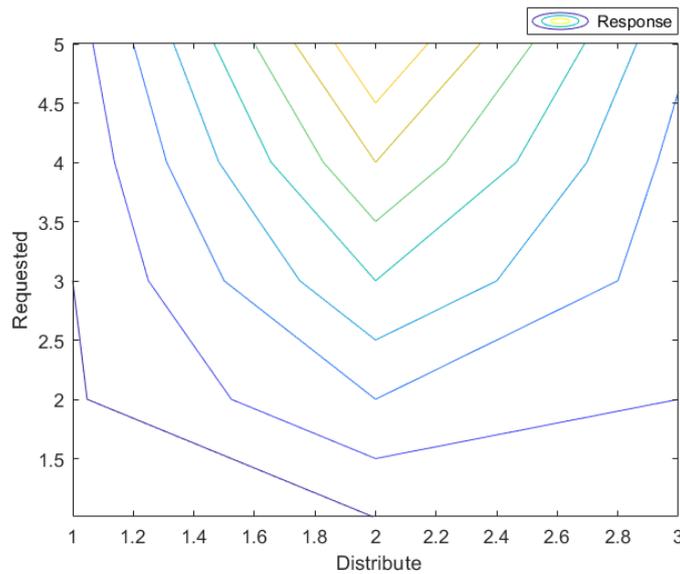


Figure 5: Cultural influence

## 5. Conclusions

(1) The above experiments show that English-Chinese translation studies not only require certain cultural basis as the background, but also show a cultural difference, and cultural difference has an important impact on English-Chinese idiom translation. Translation is a creative activity in which the meaning of one language is expressed in another language. [25] therefore, in order to translate English and Chinese idioms well, one should have a good command of language skills, and master certain translation skills to understand that mastering English idioms is a unique and fixed expression formed in the process of using English, which has the characteristics of wholeness and fixedness. This requires careful accumulation in learning, systematic learning. To always improve their cultivation, maintain a rigorous attitude. If the language is not good, the translated text is soulless. And the translated text is almost impossible to achieve concise, concise, and vivid. Therefore, translators should learn and observe the norms of previous translators and pay attention to improving their skills.

(2) In addition, the questionnaire shows that although most of the translation results are correct, 122 of the 180 students have passed, but their translation is not beautiful. At this time, we need to combine theory with practice and be brave in innovation. Translation is a creative language activity with strong practicality. While learning the theoretical basis well, we must pay attention to the combination with practice. There is no standard answer in translation. Therefore, when translating idioms, we can learn and absorb the strengths of others in understanding the spirit of the source text and translation expression, so as to promote the improvement of translation ability. Where there is life, there is hope. The translation, though understandable, was eerie. A good translator can turn his or her own culture into a better sentence and can make reasonable innovations without changing the original meaning. Where there is life, there is hope. This not only translates the original meaning, but also makes the sentence more beautiful and fluent. If you want to translate English and Chinese idioms well, you must pass a lot of practical tests. The improvement of translation ability is a process of long-term practice and accumulation. The translation of idioms requires the translator to constantly understand and communicate, overcome cultural barriers, and make use of corpus as much as possible to find parallel texts, read widely and practice repeatedly.

(3) This paper focuses on the translation of English and Chinese Idioms from the perspective of cultural differences. The experimental data shows that cultural differences have a great influence. It is necessary to pay attention to cultural differences and the differences and unity between Chinese and English cultures. Only by understanding the differences and unity, can translation research be better done. If you do not understand the cultural differences reflected in the two languages, it will be difficult to understand and translate smoothly. If you understand the relevant cultural background and understand the historical culture, religious belief and geographical environment of the region to which the original text belongs, you will get twice the result with half the effort. Students can improve themselves by reading foreign books, periodicals and videos. It would be better if they could live in a foreign country. It can also be seen from the experimental data that the longer students live in a foreign country, the better their cultural integration and the more beautiful and accurate their translation. No matter what kind of language we translate, we need to practice over and over again, so that when we understand the culture, we should also remember to draw lessons from experience, summarize and improve the translation level.

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