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# Chinese-to-English Translation Analysis of the Article Cultural Confidence, Self-reflection and Responsibility: from Guidelines for Children to Chinese National Studies

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**Abstract:** Translation promotes cross-language meaning transmission and bridges cross-culture understanding of the people from different countries. The Confucian introductory textbook, Guidelines for Children, holds significant value for contemporary children's value education and is an indispensable part of the inheritance of Chinese culture and educational practice. To contribute to the promotion of Chinese culture internationally, this translation practice takes the article of Cultural Confidence, Self-reflection and Responsibility: from Guidelines for Children to Chinese National Studies as the source text. This report uses the framework of "Comprehension, Expression and Adaptation" proposed by Professor Li Changshuan to discuss the difficulties the translator encountered in understanding the text, expressing the meaning and adapting the text and the corresponding solutions. There are five chapters in this practice report. Part I is the introduction to the translation task; Part II is the translation process; Part III introduces the analysis framework of "Comprehension, Expression and Adaptation"; Part IV is the main part—case analysis. Part V summarizes the gains and reflections in the course of completing the task.

**Keywords:** *Guidelines for Children*; Chinese National Studies; Chinese-English Translation; post-editing; CEA framework.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. The Background of the Translation Task

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Chinese government proposed a policy to disseminate Chinese culture worldwide, aiming to better inherit and promote its excellence. The 20th National Congress report emphasized the need to uphold Chinese cultural values, distill and showcase the spiritual symbols and cultural essence of Chinese civilization, and accelerate the construction of Chinese discourse and narrative systems. It called for telling China's stories well, spreading China's voice, and presenting a credible, lovable, and respectable image of China.

# B. The Significance of the Translation Task

The Confucian introductory textbook, Guidelines for Children, is a classical text that inherits and promotes the wisdom and virtues of ancient sages, outlining social behavioral norms. Its concise yet rich language is both easy to understand and profound in meaning, making it an important part of the inheritance

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of Chinese culture and educational practice. It holds significant value for contemporary children's value education and has a profound impact on promoting personal development, family harmony, and harmonious social progress. However, Guidelines for Children has faced intense controversy in modern society. While celebrated for its emphasis on respect, filial piety, and proper conduct, it is also criticized for its perceived feudal elements and potential incompatibility with modern educational philosophies. These debates highlight the tension between tradition and modernity, raising questions about the text's relevance in today's world. The translation of Guidelines for Children into English serves as a critical bridge to address these controversies. By rendering the text into a widely-used foreign language, the translation practice provides the translator an opportunity to learn the Chinese early education classic in detail, and critically examine the text's content and values as well. Through translation, some of the ambiguities and misunderstandings can be clarified, and the text's core messages can be

recontextualized for a modern and international audience. It is expected that the target text will help to address the concerns of critics among a larger audience of readers while preserving the text's cultural essence, enabling it to find a meaningful position in contemporary China and hopefully the world. Moreover, the translation practice contributes to the broader cultural mission of reconciling tradition with modernity for the Chinese students, the future builders of China. By engaging with Guidelines for Children in a thoughtful and analytical manner, the translation process can help identify which elements of the text are timeless and universally applicable, and which may require reinterpretation or adaptation. This aligns with the principle of" taking the essence and discarding the dregs", ensuring that the text's cultural legacy is preserved while fostering its relevance in an era of globalization and cultural exchange.

#### II. TRANSLATION PROCESS

#### A. Preparation

Before embarking on the translation task, the translator extensively reviewed the English version of Guidelines for Children translated by different translators and summarized seven distinct translations of the book title. Through comparative analysis of these translations, the translator found that they varied in terms of fidelity, fluency, and the conveyance of cultural connotations. Some translations were overly literal, making it difficult for target language readers to understand, while others were excessively domesticated, losing the cultural characteristics of the original work. Therefore, the translator chose "Guidelines for Children" as the translation for the book title. This translation is concise and easy for readers to understand while accurately conveying the core content of the original book, which is to provide guidance on behavioral norms for children. Regarding the translation of the proper noun "国学", considering the readability for target language readers, I selected "Chinese National Studies." This translation retains the concept of "国学" as a unique academic field in China and allows English readers to quickly grasp its connotations related to Chinese culture and academic research, avoiding comprehension barriers caused by cultural differences. Specifically, during the process of understanding the source text, the translator primarily encountered two main challenges: First, there were complex sentences with intricate grammar and academic vocabulary. The translator needed to clarify the logical relationships within these sentences and, when necessary, use artificial intelligence to assist in translating the source text into more accessible language. Second, there were highly condensed terms with specific meanings, such as classical texts like extracts of Guidelines for Children or phrases like "thick black theory", which were not annotated. The translator had to look up their original meanings and develop appropriate translation strategies.

# **B.** Combination of Machine Translation and Postediting

During the translation process, the translator adopted a combination of machine translation and postediting, such as Deep Seek, kimi, ChatGPT, and Claude as auxiliary tools. Machine translators can quickly generate preliminary versions, which lays the foundation for subsequent editing work. However, machine translation results often have issues such as grammatical errors, misunderstandings of the source text, and omissions. Therefore, in the machine translation stage, the translator did not rely solely on one translation software. Instead, the translator translated each paragraph in several translation software programs and selected what I considered the best version from the results. This process not only improved translation efficiency but also helped to preliminarily filter out more accurate translation content by comparing different versions.

#### C. Independent Post-editing

After obtaining the preliminary translation version, the translator first independently conducted careful and serious post-editing. The focus of this stage was to review and modify the machine translation results sentence by sentence. Through this process, the translator found that there were some obvious grammatical errors in the machine translation results, such as incomplete sentence structures, inconsistent tenses, and subject-verb disagreements. These linguistic deficiencies directly affected the readability and accuracy of the translation, so the translation complied with English grammatical norms.

In addition, the translator found that machine translation had some deviations in understanding the source text. Since machine translators lacks the ability to deeply understand the context, they sometimes misinterpret certain words or sentences. For example, when translating some classic sentences from *Guidelines for Children*, machine translation may misunderstand due to insufficient understanding of classical Chinese. To address these issues, the translator reviewed and revised the translation content by referring to the context of the original text, striving to ensure that the translation accurately conveys the meaning of the original text.

During the editing process, the translator also found some omissions in the translation. These omissions may be due to the machine translation ignoring certain words or phrases, or because some content was misunderstood as unimportant and not translated. To ensure the completeness of the translation, the translator carefully compared the translation with the original text and supplemented the missing parts, ensuring that the translation fully presents the information of the original text.

#### D. Tutor Guidance and Language Polishing

After independently completing the postediting, the translator submitted the initial translation draft to her tutor for review. The tutor provided valuable suggestions on language expression and sentence structure. Under the guidance of the tutor, the translator further polished the language of the translation, making it more fluent and natural. At the same time, the tutor also helped the translator adjust the structure of some sentences to make them more in line with English expression habits. This process not only improved the quality of the translation but also gave the translator a deeper understanding and improvement in translation skills and language expression.

# E. Translation and Understanding of Classical Chinese

The source text contains a large amount of classical Chinese content, which is an important part of the article and also a challenge in the translation process. To accurately translate this classical Chinese, the translator consulted translations by some well-known scholars and learned from their methods and techniques. At the same time, the translator carefully read the context of the classical Chinese to gain a deep understanding of the meaning and background of these sentences. During the translation process, for some classical Chinese that already had mature translations, the translator selected what the translator considered the most appropriate version and made appropriate adjustments based on the translator's own understanding. For other classical Chinese that did not have existing translations or that the translator thought could be improved, the translator translated them into English according to the translator own understanding. When translating these difficult parts, the translator used the method of repeated reading and careful deliberation to ensure that the translation is both faithful to the original text and understandable to the target readers.

#### III. ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

The "Comprehension, Expression and Adaptation" (CEA) framework proposed by Professor Li Changshuan is used to illustrate the process of transforming the source language into the target language.

## Comprehension

Li (2020:8) argues that the translator's understanding of the content of the text must be thorough and meticulous, and the degree should be close to, reach or even exceed that of the author. A correct

understanding of the source text is the basis of translation.

In the report, the translator exemplified how she dealt with the difficulties in comprehension by paying attention to the background information, writings in classical Chinese, analyzing the context, and so forth. For example, when encountering classical Chinese texts or culturally specific terms, the translator referred to classical texts and commentaries to grasp the precise meaning and context, ensuring that the translation is faithful to the original intent.

#### A. Expression

Li (2020:26) argues that on the one hand, the translator should fully express the meaning of the source text without any increase, decrease or distortion in meaning, and on the other hand, the translated text should conform to the expressive habits of the target readers.

In the process of expression, the translator focuses on how to achieve "expressiveness". In this report, the translator gave five examples to present how she attempted to tackle problems like translating texts that embodied culture gap, etc. For instance, the translator adjusted sentence structures to align with English grammatical norms, compensated for cultural gaps by providing explanations or using equivalent expressions, and maintained cultural features to preserve the original cultural connotations.

# **B.** Adaptation

Li (2020:32) points out that adaptation refers to adding, subtracting or adjusting the literal information of the source text to conform to the expressive habits of English or better achieve the purpose of translation.

In the case analysis, the report addresses adaptation from amplification, omission and cultural difference to make the target text more coherent and realize accuracy. For example, the translator expanded certain phrases to clarify meanings for English readers, omitted redundant or overly complex expressions to maintain conciseness, and adapted cultural differences by finding appropriate equivalents or explanations to bridge the gap between the source and target cultures.

#### IV. CASE STUDY

A. Comprehensioni. Background information

#### Example-1

	ST	什么是"国学"?《周礼》有载:"掌国学之政,以教国子小舞",《礼记》也说"国有学",《周礼正			
		义》说:"国学者,在国城中王宫左之小学也",指的是国家设立的学府机构。			
TT-1 What is "国学"? The Rites of Zhou records: "In charge of the politics of national studie		What is "国学"? The Rites of Zhou records: "In charge of the politics of national studies, to teach the sons of			
	the nation the small dance", and the Book of Rites also says "the state has its own studies." Zh				
		Commentary and Elucidation (Explanations to the Rites of Zhou) states: "Guoxue refers to the primary school			

	on the left side of the king's palace in the national city," which means the educational institutions established
	by the state.
TT-2	What is "国学"? The Rites of Zhou records: "Officials managed the affairs of the state school to teach the
	children of the nobility ritual dances.", and the Book of Rites also says "The state has its own school." The
	Rites of Zhou: Commentary and Elucidation (Explanations to the Rites of Zhou) states: "Guoxue refers to the
	primary schools located on the left side of the king's palace in the capital city."

#### **Analysis**

The source text explains that the concept of "国学" varies significantly across ancient, modern, and contemporary eras. It cites examples of the term "国学" from several classical texts. Initially, when translating these passages, the translator failed to grasp the true meaning of "国学" in these historical contexts and instead relied on literal translations based on personal assumptions. Later, under the guidance of the tutor, the translator clarified the distinctions: in the *Rites of Zhou*,

"国学" refers to state-established schools; in the *Book of Rites* simply means the state has educational institutions; and in *The Rites of Zhou*: Commentary and Elucidation(Explanations to the Rites of Zhou), "国学" is further specified as an elementary educational institution established by the state, located to the left of the royal palace—essentially a state-run primary school.

# ii. Writings in Classical Chinese

Example 2

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ST	《 弟子规》中对应有"冬则温,夏则清,晨则省,昏则定。"			
TT-1 Make beddings better according to th' weather. Give them greeting, at morning' n evening.				
TT-2	In Guidelines for Children, there is a corresponding section, "In winter, keep your parents from cold dire, and			
	make them feel cool in summers fire; greet your parents at morn when you rise, and say goodbye at night when			
	they retire.			

#### **Analysis**

Target Test I uses simplified language and rhyme, likely to maintain a sense of rhythm, but this can sometimes be overly simplistic, leaving readers puzzled. The colloquial tone also diminishes the solemnity of the classic text. For example, "Make beddings better" is vague and may leave readers unclear about the specific action required. However, Target Test II is more vivid, with phrases like "cold dire" and "summer's fire" that enhance the imagery while maintaining the rhyming structure. The archaic words such as "dire" and "retire" mimic the admonitory style of the original text of *Guidelines for Children* English. Moreover, Target Test II uses more active verbs like "keep" and "make",

emphasizing the purposefulness of the actions, which aligns with the essence of "冬温而夏凊" from the Book of Rites (such as the story of Huang Xiang warming the bed for his father in Twenty-four Stories of Filial Piety). It highlights that children should aim for their parents' comfort, not just adjusting the bedding temperature. Additionally, "say goodbye at night" is more accurate than "greeting" for the original phrase "昏则定" which implies arranging for parents to retire for the night, rather than just a greeting.

#### iii. Context

#### Example 3

ST	规矩的意义一旦变异,自然会成为党同伐异的"搅屎棍",让好不容易赢得的社会公平正义、人身权利重
	新回到君君臣臣发挥到极致时候的人身依附关系,回到人成为规矩、规训的奴仆的年代。
TTT.	

Once rules vary in meaning by the misinterpretations of people with ulterior motives, they may naturally become "troublemakers" of factional disputes and persecution of dissidents, then social fairness and justice and personal rights won by arduous struggle of human beings for hundreds or thousands of years may be reversed to the state of extreme personal attachment under the rule of feudal emperors, returning to the time when human beings were slaves to rules.

#### **Analysis**

The primary challenges in translating this sentence into English stem from the need to accurately convey culturally specific terms and political metaphors while maintaining coherence and logical flow. The phrase "党同伐异" poses a difficulty due to its deeprooted political connotation, which implies forming cliques to exclude dissenters and reflects power struggles

within an autocratic tradition. Similarly, the term "搅屎棍" presents a challenge due to its derogatory and metaphorical nature. The phrase "君君臣臣" introduces another layer of complexity, as it encapsulates Confucian ethical teachings and absolute obedience within a hierarchical system.

#### **B.** Expression

## I. Adjusting Sentence Structures

#### Example 4

ST	中国人在自己的土地上,面对着有血有肉的中国生活,用中国人的语言、中国人的体验,写中国自己		
	的历史,这是最大的优势。		
TT-1 Chinese people, on their own land, facing the vivid Chinese life, using the Chinese language			
experiences to write China's own history, this is the greatest advantage.			
TT-2 The greatest advantage for Chinese people is that deeply rooted in our land and our colorful and vivid			
	write our own history with our experiences in our language,.		

#### **Analysis**

Chinese emphasizes the coherence of meaning in logical connection, with a relatively loose sentence structure. In contrast, English depends on conjunctions and grammatical structures to organize sentences, focusing more on formal cohesion. TT-1 is the unmodified output from a machine translation, which appears to have a loose sentence structure with multiple participial phrases in parallel. English readers may find it less coherent. TT-2 is the revised version with the help of the tutor. It has a clear main clause structure, establishing a main-subordinate relationship through "that" clauses, forming the typical English logical

framework of "main clause(advantage)-subordinate clause (specific manifestation)". This "general-specific" structure aligns better with the deductive thinking pattern of English. The use of sentence patterns like "The greatest advantage...is that..." makes the logic clear. Moreover, TT-2 employs participial phrases such as "deeply rooted in", integrating "land" and "life" into a single modifying structure, thus avoiding repetitive prepositional phrases and achieving greater conciseness in English. Additionally, the choice of words has been adjusted. For example, the phrase "lively and vivid" is used to translate "colorful and vivid", which is more vivid and appropriate.

# Example 5

ST	国学要发展壮大,就必须解决自身的逻辑起点问题, 要消除排外主义的初始立场。		
TT-1 For Chinese National Studies to develop and grow, it must solve the problem of its own logical starting			
	and eliminate the initial stance of exclusivism.		
TT-2	TT-2 If Chinese National Studies is to develop and grow, the problem of its own logical starting point must be sol		
	and the initial stance of exclusivism must be eliminated.		

#### **Analysis**

The original Chinese sentence employs active voice, which is typical in Chinese discourse, but in English academic contexts, passive voice is often preferred for its objectivity and formality. In TT-2, the shift from active to passive voice enhances the text's

alignment with English stylistic norms. By omitting the agent and focusing on the issues themselves—the "logical starting point" and "exclusionist stance", the translator hopes to achieve greater conciseness and objectivity.

#### Example 6

ST	唯其如此,才能海纳百川有容乃大,充分体现出中华文明的胸襟与超越性。		
TT-1	Only in this way can we embrace all differences and fully reflect the breadth of mind and transcendence of		
	Chinese civilization.		
TT-2	Only in this way, can Chinese civilization embrace the essence from other cultures with its openness and		
	surpassing ability.		

#### **Analysis**

The objectivity of the subject in TT-1 is compromised by using "we" as the subject, which implies a subjective perspective and can easily create a sense of subjective interference. The original Chinese sentence does not have an explicit subject, and adding a subject in TT-1 may lead to a shift in focus. TT-2 directly uses "Chinese civilization" as the core subject, personifying the abstract cultural entity and preserving the objectivity of the original sentence without a subject. This approach aligns with the academic text's emphasis on the object's attributes. In TT-1, the subject is disconnected from the action: "we embrace" and "reflect

Chinese civilization" belong to different subjects (people and civilization), resulting in a fragmented logic of action. The original phrase "海纳百川" and "体现胸襟" are both actions of the same subject (Chinese civilization). TT-2 centers the entire sentence around "Chinese civilization" (embrace the essence / with its openness and surpassing ability), attributing both actions and attributes to the same subject. This maintains logical coherence and more accurately reflects the original meaning where "Chinese civilization" is the sole core. Therefore, the translator ultimately chose TT-2 as the final version.

# **Ii. Compensating Culture Gap**

Example 7

ST	我们知道,鲁迅讲过的"吃人"的历史,柏杨讲过的"酱缸文化",李宗吾讲过的"厚黑学",以及那么多			
	的生杀予夺、欺凌跋扈,甚至无耻下作,包括张鸣所说《二十四孝图》里半是矫情半是绝情,无一不			
是传统文化,国学中的重头戏码。				
TT-1	Γ-1 We know that Lu Xun talked about the "cannibalistic" history, Bo Yang talked about the "soy sauce jar culture,"			
	Li Zongwu talked about "thick black studies," and there are so many instances of arbitrary power, bullying, and			
	even shameless behavior, including what Zhang Ming said in The Twenty-four Filial Exemplars, where it is half			
	sentimental and half heartless, all of which are important parts of traditional culture and Chinese National			
	Studies.			
TT-2	2 We still remember that Lu Xun once criticized history "cannibalistic", Bo Yang described it as a "soy sauce jar			
	culture," Li Zongwu proposed "Thick face and black heart" (cheeky and dark-minded) theory in his history			
	studies. There are so many instances of arbitrary abuse of power, bullying, and even shameless behavior mixed			
	into Chinese traditional culture. According to Zhang Ming, in The Twenty-four Filial Piety, a half is			
	unconventional affectation and a half heartless cruelty. These are some of the important problems with traditional			
	culture and Chinese National Studies.			

#### **Analysis**

The translator adopts the method of literal translation plus parenthetical explanation, which not only preserves the metaphorical imagery of Li Zongwu's theory ("thick face" symbolizes shamelessness, and "black heart" symbolizes cunning), but also provides semantic clarification for readers who are unfamiliar with this term. Meanwhile, the translator also maintains

the cultural connotations and critical perspective of the original text, allowing readers to understand the complexity and depth of Chinese traditional culture. The translation is accurate and clear, making it easy for readers to grasp the meaning of the original text.

## **Iii. Maintaining Culture Features**

#### Example 8

	ST	亲爱我,孝何难?亲恶我,孝方贤。
	TT	When you are in your parents' favour, your filial piety is normal and expected; but should you be out of their
favour, your filial piety is precious and respected.		favour, your filial piety is precious and respected.

#### Analysis

The translator adopts the method of literal translation, which not only accurately conveys the meaning of the original text, but also retains the cultural connotations and linguistic style of the original. The translation is concise and clear, in line with the characteristics of classical Chinese, and helps the target readers to understand the essence of traditional Chinese filial piety culture. Meanwhile, the translator has also

maintained the rhyme of the original text, which makes the translation more rhythmic and easier to remember. This not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of the translation, but also better conveys the charm of traditional Chinese culture.

C. Adaptation i. Amplification

## Example 9

ST	学以致用是中国传统文化的精髓之一,20世纪初的学者们,在谈论国学的时候,就是为着奋发图强的		
	,为着中国人的,以及中国人的家园的生存与建设的。		
TT	TT Learning for practical application is one of the essences of traditional Chinese culture. When the scholars at the		
	beginning of the 20th century discussed Chinese National Studies, they had the aims of striving for strength, for		
	the Chinese people, and for the survival and construction of the Chinese people's homeland		

#### **Analysis**

The translation of "学以致用是中国传统文化的精髓之一"is expanded to "Learning for practical application is one of the essences of traditional Chinese

culture." Here, the phrase "for practical application" is specifically described to clarify that learning is oriented towards real-world use, making the concept more accessible to English readers.

#### ii. Omission

#### Example 10

ļ	ST	《 弟子规》的这种尴尬遭际,	正是古典文本在国人	人对待传统、	面对现实、	绸缪未来的大是大非之辩中
ļ		的典型范本和微缩景象。				

TT The awkward predicament of *Guidelines for Children* epitomizes the grand debate among Chinese people concerning tradition, reality, and future planning.

#### **Analysis:**

In the English translation, the phrase "古典文本在国人对待传统、面对现实、绸缪未来的大是大非之辩中的典型范本和微缩景象"is adapted and summarized as "epitomizes the grand debate among

Chinese people concerning tradition, reality, and future planning." This omission makes the translation concise and clear while retaining the original meaning, in line with the principle of adaptation in CEA framework.

#### **Iii. Cultural Difference**

#### Example 11

ST	目前对待《弟子规》的态度,可以说是多元存在,	见仁见智,但泾渭分明、各执一端的情况最为普遍。	
TT	Current comments on Guidelines for Children can be d	escribed as diverse and interpretative, with clear distinctions	
	and polarized positions being most common.		

#### **Analysis:**

The translation of the three Chinese idioms in this sentence reflects the translator's approach to cultural adaptation. "见仁见智"is translated as "interpretative", which captures the essence of individual differences in perception and judgment. This translation choice acknowledges the cultural context where personal viewpoints heavily influence interpretations. "泾渭分明 "is rendered as "clear distinctions", effectively conveying the idea of obvious boundaries between different viewpoints. This translation helps English readers grasp the cultural nuance of sharp contrasts in opinions. "各执一端"is translated as "polarized positions", which not only emphasizes the division but also aligns with the English expression to describe situations where opposing sides firmly hold their respective views. Together, these translations demonstrate a balance between preserving the original cultural connotations and making the text accessible to English readers, showcasing the translator's effort to bridge cultural gaps and facilitate cross-cultural communication.

### V. CONCLUSION

This translation practice has achieved significant outcomes in rendering the article about Chinese traditional culture into English. By employing the CEA framework, the translator has successfully navigated through the complexities of *Guidelines for Children*, and its evolution into "Chinese National Studies". The translation process involved meticulous comprehension of the source text's historical, cultural, and contextual dimensions, accurate expression in the target language while maintaining cultural authenticity, and strategic adaptation to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps. This practice has not only enhanced the translator's understanding of the interplay between tradition and modernity but also contributed to the overseas dissemination of Chinese culture. It provides an

accessible version for international audiences to appreciate the essence of Chinese traditional values and educational wisdom.

However, the student translator has found some critical limitations in the course of her hard work. First, the reliance on secondary sources for interpreting classical terms and idioms may have brought about potential biases. For instance, scholarly interpretations of texts such as the Rites of Zhou or Twenty-Four Filial Piety Stories may diverge, affecting the accuracy of cultural adaptations. Second, time constraints limited the depth of comparative analysis with existing translations of Guidelines for Children, which could have provided deeper insights into best practices for preserving cultural connotations while enhancing accessibility. Third, the absence of reader feedback mechanisms—such as surveys or focus groups—prevented evaluating how effectively the target text resonated with Englishspeaking audiences.

Looking ahead, several directions should be explored to advance cross-cultural translation practices. Future research could conduct comparative studies of multiple translated versions of Guidelines for Children to identify effective strategies for reconciling cultural specificity with universal readability. Extending the CEA framework to other classical Chinese texts could validate its adaptability across genres and historical periods. Additionally, incorporating reader-centric methodologies, such as analyzing feedback from English-speaking readers, would provide empirical evidence of the translation's success in bridging cultural divides. In the future the translator should also prioritize interdisciplinary collaboration, combining linguistic expertise with historical and cultural research to address the complexities of classical Chinese texts. By refining these strategies, translators can better fulfill their role as cultural mediators, contributing to the global dissemination of Chinese culture and fostering multicultural understanding.

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