

## Reader Reception of Cultural Context for Chinese Translation of Scientific and Technical Discourse: An Empirical Study

**Authors :** Caiwen Wang, Yuling Liu

**Abstract :** Scientific and technical discourse is non-literary, and so it is often regarded as merely informative, free of the cultural context of both the source and the target language. Thus it is supposed that translators of sci-tech texts do not need to consider cultural factors in the translation process as readers only care for the information conveyed. This paper takes a different standpoint and shows that cultural context plays an important part in scientific and technical texts and thereafter in bridging the gap between different cultural communities of readers. The paper argues that the common cultural context for members of the same cultural community, such as morals, customs, and values, also underpins the sci-tech discourse of various text types, and therefore may pose difficulties for readers of a different cultural community if this is re-presented or translated literally. The research hypothesises that depending on how it is re-presented or translated; cultural context can either encourage or discourage readers' reading experience and subsequently their interest to read and use translation texts. Drawing upon the Reception Theory by Hans Robert Jauss, the research investigates the relationship between cultural context and scientific and technical translation from English to Chinese. Citing 55 examples of sci-tech translations from magazines, newspapers and the website of Shell, a major international oil and gas company, the research shows that the source texts for these 55 cases all have bearing on the source cultural context, and translators will need to address this in the translation process instead of doing literal translation to be merely correct. The research then interviews 15 research subjects for their views of the translations. By assessing readers' reception and perception of translated Chinese sci-tech discourse, the research concludes that cultural context contributes to the quality of scientific and technical translation in an important way and then discusses the implications of the findings for training scientific and technical translators.

**Keywords :** Chinese translation, cultural context, reception theory, scientific and technical texts

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