The Influence of British and American Cultural Differences on English and American Literature Review

Jiao Lei

Abstract

In an era of globalization, cross-cultural communication is not strange to us with studying and travelling abroad, and even immigration becoming a part of our lives. In such an era of international communication being increasingly frequent, learning the culture of other countries will help us to do well in international communication. The paper is going to study, from the British and American history and culture, the differences of all kinds of their present acts in the world and impacts of the historical reasons on their own citizens, to not only let the reader understand the cultural differences between these two countries, but also to get the cause of the difference to better understand their cultures.

Key words: British and American Culture; Religion; Literature Review

1 INTRODUCTION

First of all, we are going to talk about the homology of British and American culture which is undeniable. British culture is the root and source of American culture with the United Kingdom people accounting for a very large proportion of the early settlers of the United States. Let nature take its course, they brought their culture, their personalities, ways of thinking to this new continent. Moreover, in the major historical events of modern times, many cooperation has occurred in these two countries which brought many common points in their cultural exchanges. However, there is a large difference between these two countries regarding to their own history: the history of Britain is longer than the United States’, because before the industrial revolution, Britain has a long period of agriculture civilization, and much British people's cultural life has been influenced by the upper class of French due to the French occupation. For example, in medieval England, the everyday lives and language habits of manor Lords have been deeply affected by French and in the long term developed into a unique British gentleman demeanor that we now see, which often presents: decent clothes, very courteous speaks, polite behaviors, methodical and patient life, but the Britain often likes to foreshadowing hundreds of sentences when they want to say one sentence of bad words. In addition, in the British bourgeois revolution, due to the compromise of the bourgeoisie and the feudalism, the current constitutional monarchy has been formed and many British classical etiquette has been preserved.

2 Differences of the British and American Political Party Systems

Britain is the birthplace of modern Party system as well as a typical country of Two-Party system. Two major Parties have mastered the British politics in more than 100 years, which are first the Tory and the Whig, then the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party, and later the Conservative Party and the Labor Party. The British Political Party system has the following characteristics: (1)It combined with the

1Foreign Languages School, Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan City, Hubei Province, 430070 P.R. China.
parliamentary cabinet system with the ruling Party and the opposition one having clear boundary in form. In Britain, parliamentary cabinet system has been carried out with the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The Lords are not elected, but inherited by the noble or appointed by the king, which has nothing to do with political Parties. While the house of Commons is produced by election. These two major political Parties fight for the house of Commons seats by the campaign with the one win a majority of seats to organize the cabinet and its leader to be the prime minister and to master the power of the government. It can be say that the Party organizing the cabinet is the ruling Party, which masters both the cabinet power and the house of Commons power. Therefore, the Party got less seats in the election is the opposition Party which can organize the "shadow cabinet" with the ministers and is responsible for supervising the government. ②Both of the two major political Parties have taken centralism, mainly in: regardless of the central or the local, each Party has a sound organization and strict organizational discipline; especially strict rules of the parliamentary vote in the Party. In the important parliament vote, members of both Parties are asked to vote following with the intention of their leaders as a group. Otherwise, they will be severely punished. The United States is also a typical country of the Two-Party system with its following characteristics: ⑴it is associated with the Democratic Republic Party, and its main activity is the Party's presidential campaign, because the United States is a presidential state. The Party winning the presidential election campaign will be the ruling Party, otherwise the loser will be the opposition Party. Although the United States Congress is also produced by election, the number of seats of the two major political parties in the Parliament has nothing to do with the ruling status. In the United States, the Party wins the presidential election can hold its ruling status even if it fails in the congressional election. ⑵The Party is loose with no strict organization and discipline. ⑶The Two-Party system is relatively stable. The Two-Party system in the United States originated from the opposition between the Federal Party and the anti-Federal Party, and later developed into the competition between the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. In American history, the third Party campaign often occurred but was never successful. The pattern of two major political Parties taking turns to rule the politics has been relatively stable.

3 Homology of the British and American culture
To be more exact, the British culture is the root and the source of American culture which inherited many things of British culture. But with the long history of development, cultural heritage and different ecological environment, in more than 200 years’ independent growth, American culture has produced many variations. Firstly, although the two countries are native speakers of English, some differences are existing. Pronunciation of the British English is clear with liaison being less and sounds being full of articulation. In contrast, Americans adhere to the rule of saving and liaison which is very consistent with their simple and casual style. Secondly, they have their own characteristics in the daily life and customs. In the dressing, the British commonly care about the gentleman’s manner with suits and ties and shiny leather shoes. While Americans are more casual and do not mind other people's evaluation with their dressing mainly being comfortable based. Thirdly, in the diet, it is known that Britain is the country full of gentlemen and ladies. from materials to cooking, everything will be done carefully to the extreme and exude nobility and elegance. They should eat with no words and tableware being not to emit percussion voice. While for the Americans, all may not be so fine and luxury, but for convenience, therefore, only fast food can meet their requirements in their fast life. To some extent, such a diet also reflects the Americans’ casual nature and rigorous and speedy action which is different from the British’s procrastination and attention to detail. Fourthly, in
education, they also have their own views. Americans are tireless in the pursuit of equality and freedom embodying in its multivariate, open, international and flexible educational system which makes education full of vigor and vitality. While the conservative and rigorous personalities of the British reflecting in the rigorous academic atmosphere and perfect education system. Two countries, two cultures and two distinct educational styles turn out to commonly represent the world's top educational standards, which is related to the profound understanding of the governments and the public.

4 Similarities and differences in religious beliefs

British and American people are Christians, but in the history of Christianity, it is divided into three factions: Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. Let us first mention the Britain which is mainly divided geographically into England, Scotland, Welsh and Northern Ireland; but from the perspective of religion, the British people actually can also be divided into 4 types: Northern Irish, English, Scottish and Welsh, in which majority of the Northern Irish are Catholic; the Englander are mainly Episcopalian; the Scots are mainly Presbyterian of Protestant; and the Welsh have faith of Anglicanism, Catholicism, the Presbyterianism of Protestant and the old Methodist. Therefore, the British religion is diversified. While in the United States, which has a long tradition of Judaism and Christianity, now is rapidly becoming one of the most religion diverse country in the world. The United States is located in the center of North America, with an area of 9.37 million square kilometers, a population of 280 million and 76% of which being the urban population and the white being accounted for about 80% who are descendants of European immigrants and the black being more than 30 million, and the rest are descendants of Asia and the Pacific Islands immigrants, Indian and Inuit, etc. It is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country with its residents mainly believe in Christianity. In American religion, Christians (Protestant) are the largest group with about 156 million people, accounting for 57% of the total population of the United states. The Jewish is in the second place. There are also many people believing in Catholic. In addition, many people also believe in Islam, Buddhism, Orthodox, Taoism and other religious.

5 British and American literature and British and American literature review

Literature is an important way to display the national culture display and the crystallization of the wisdom of all ethnic groups. The British and American literature is a window for the world to understand their cultures. The English literature has experienced many stages and showed unique charm in each stage, such as the Renaissance, Neoclassicism, Romanticism, Realism and so on. After the Second World War, British literature has become more diversified. American literature originates from the English literature and largely influenced by foreign cultures. In the beginning, American literature has just imitated other nations’ literatures, till the end of nineteenth Century, it got rid of the impact of other nations and went to be independent. By the early twentieth Century, American literature reached a boom. After the Second World War, the fierce struggle between the old and new literature guided the United States literature to be diversified. The British and American literature review is based on work analysis and following with profound analysis and comment on literary works. The British and American literature review is not equal to the work analysis because it is much more profound than general literature analysis. In addition, the British and American literature review is focused on the thinking and criticism of the works’ literature and art performance and external performance, while the literary analysis pays more attention to the nature of the work itself.
There are three major impacts of the British and American cultural differences on the literature review, including the carrier of the cultural development, the cultural connotation and the cultural history. Firstly, the influence of the carrier of cultural development on the literature review. Language is the carrier of the national culture, and also one of the important performance of the national culture. So the difference between British and American culture can be embodied in the carrier of language. Furthermore, the language of literary works is mostly produced by the author after refining, so the cultural differences showed by the language of the works are more prominent which have huge influence on British and American literary review. It is more typical and representative to understand the influence of British and American literary criticism from the carrier of language. English originates from the United Kingdom, so the British literature has a unique advantage and is more refined in the application of language. And taking it into consideration, the literary critics will be very cautious in the use of the language when conducting comments on the British literary works. In the opinion of the author, because the literary critics subconsciously take the English as the authentic one in English literature, but regarding themselves as the foreign one, they are easy to use the language undeserved and profane the legitimacy of the British English. As a result, they will leak the unbounded personality of the British when they review the English literature. American English is developed from British English, but compared with the British English, in essence, there is no difference. However, the United States made necessary changes and development of its language when fighting to become an independent country. American English, as a new kind of language, has not been welcomed by the literary critics when it is displayed through literary works.

6 The influence of cultural connotation differences on the English and American literature review

The English literature review is always back and forth in the cultural heritage and breaking away from the traditional culture. Especially in seventeen and eighteenth century, the literature reviews in the United Kingdom showed the fighting of between inheriting and breaking the traditional culture. After entering twentieth century, great changes have taken place in British literature review with sorting and reviewing the historical experience of literature review by the literary critics, and then significant changes have been occurred in the following literature reviews. The literary critics summed up the historical experience of literature reviews and reconstructed the literary theory which is suitable for the modern society. However, American literature is an independent literary system. Even though American literature is influenced by many kinds of foreign literatures, but there is no denying that American literature has its own unique charm. Due to the American literature has been influenced by a variety of literatures, its independence is more attracting. American literature originates from British literature, but it has a great difference with British literature. This independence also demonstrates the independence of this country. Meanwhile, the corresponding American literature review is also obviously independent.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The cultural difference is an important factor influencing the British and American literature review. Through the analysis of the differences between American and British cultures, what we can recognize is that the differences between British and American cultures have a dominant influence on the review of English and American literature. When coming into contact with the British and American literature review, readers should fully take into account of the impact of the British and American cultural differences, so as to master the content of literary works more accurately.
Reference


