

Unit 1

Introduction: Translation and Translation Techniques

● 单元要点概述

相关翻译技巧训练 英译汉: Proverbs in Latin American Talk

相关翻译技巧训练 汉译英: 谚语

I. 翻译的重要作用

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本单元为全书的绪论, 简要回顾了我国的翻译史, 阐述了翻译的重要性, 举例说明了翻译不当所造成的问题, 界定了翻译的性质和类别, 对翻译的原则及标准、直译与意译等问题展开了讨论, 并就翻译技巧与实践的关系进行了阐述。

严复的“信、达、雅”标准, 仁者见仁, 智者见智。我们一般采用“忠实、通顺”的标准即可。直译与意译是一个相对的概念, 没有截然的划分, 无论采用哪一种, 均须以理解原文为前提。需要注意的是, 直译要近情理, 便于读者理解、接受, 否则就会变成硬译、死译; 意译应当注重事实依据, 不能无中生有、随意杜撰, 否则就会变成曲译、胡译。

翻译的种种技巧方法源于翻译实践, 不能本末倒置。翻译能力的形成不能只靠学习理论知识和方法技巧, 必须通过扎扎实实的训练, 完成大量的翻译实践方能奏效。

Practice of the Relevant Skill

1. E-C Translation

Proverbs in Latin American Talk

Proverbs are the popular sayings that brighten so much Latin American talk, the boiled-down wisdom that you are as apt to hear from professors as from peasants, from



beggars as from *élégantes*. Brief and colorful, they more often than not carry a sting.

When a neighbor's dismally unattractive daughter announced her engagement, Imelda remarked, "You know what they say, Senora: 'There's no pot so ugly it can't find a lid.'" And when her son-in-law blustered about how he was going to get even with the boss who had docked his pay, Imelda fixed him with a cold eye and said, "Little fish does not eat big fish."

One afternoon I heard Imelda and her daughter arguing in the kitchen. Her daughter had quarreled with her husband's parents, and Imelda was insisting that she apologize to them. Her daughter objected, "But Mama, I just can't swallow them, not even with honey. They talk so big until we need something; then they're too poor. So today when they wouldn't even lend enough to pay for a new bed, all I did was saying something that I've heard you say a hundred times: 'If so grand, why so poor? If so poor, why so grand?'"

"Impertinent!" snorted Imelda. "Have I not also taught you, 'What the tongue says, the neck pays for'? I will not have it said that I could never teach my daughter proper respect for her elders. And before you go to beg their pardon, change those trousers for a dress. You know how your mother-in-law feels about pants on a woman. She always says, 'What was hatched a hen must not try to be a rooster!'"

Her daughter made one more try, "But Mama, you often say, 'If the saint is annoyed, don't pray to him until he gets over it.' Can't I leave it for tomorrow?"

"No, no and no! Remember: 'If the dose is nasty, swallow it fast.' You know, my child, you did wrong. But, 'A gift is the key to open the door closed against you.' I have a cake in the oven that I was making for the Senora's dinner. I will explain to the Senora. Now, dear, hurry home and make yourself pretty in your pink dress. By the time you get back, I will have the cake ready for you to take to your mother-in-law. She will be so pleased that she may make your father-in-law pay for the bed. Remember: 'One hand washes the other, but together they wash the face.'"

Notes and Explanations

1. the boiled-down wisdom 浓缩的智慧
2. *élégante* *n.* [法语]风雅的人, 淑女
3. more often than not carry a sting 往往也带刺; sting *n.* 刺, 讽刺
4. dismally unattractive 直译: 难看令人忧虑; dismally *adv.* 沉闷地, 忧郁地, 根据上下文, 此处可考虑译作“丑陋的”“其貌不扬的”
5. There's no pot so ugly it can't find a lid. 直译: 世上没有丑得找不到盖子的罐子。(暗示: 丑女不愁嫁。)

6. senora *n.* [西班牙语]夫人, 太太
7. get even with the boss who had docked his pay 找克扣他工资的老板算账; get even with 扯平, 进行报复, 算账; dock *v.* 剪掉……, 扣……工资
8. I just can't swallow them, not even with honey. 我就是受不了他们那德行, 哪怕是拌了蜜也咽不下去呀! swallow *v.* 咽, 吞下, 忍受
9. talk big 吹牛, 说大话
10. If so grand, why so poor? If so poor, why so grand? 既然那么阔, 干吗要叫穷? 既然那么穷, 干吗摆阔气? grand *adj.* 壮观的, 显赫的, 摆阔的
11. I will not have it said that... 我可不愿意让人家说…… (注意 have something done 结构的译法)
12. What was hatched a hen must not try to be a rooster! 直译: 孵出来是只母鸡就别想冒充公鸡!
13. If the saint is annoyed, don't pray to him until he gets over it. 直译: 要是圣人恼了, 在他消气之前不要向他祈祷。

2. C-E Translation

谚 语

谚语是广泛用于民间的短小精悍的格言, 通常经口头流传下来, 大都反映了劳动人民的生活实践经验。谚语类似于成语, 但口语性强, 通俗易懂, 因而很有感染力。

谚语多少能反映一个民族的地理、历史、社会制度、社会观点和态度。比如, 有些民族住在沿海一带, 靠海为生, 他们的谚语往往涉及海上航行、经受风雨、捕鱼捉蟹。像阿拉伯人这样的游牧民族的谚语则多涉及沙漠、草原、羊、马、骆驼和豺狼。尊敬老人的社会就会有颂扬老人足智多谋的谚语。妇女地位不高的社会就有许多轻视、贬低妇女的谚语。

人们的经历和对世界的认识在不少方面是相似的。因此, 尽管中国人和讲英语的人文化背景不同, 但在英语和汉语中有很多相同或相似的谚语。

Notes and Explanations

1. 经口头流传 pass down by word of mouth
2. 有感染力 appeal to
3. 游牧民族 nomads
4. 足智多谋 resourcefulness
5. 轻视、贬低 despise or disparage



I. Important Role of Translation

Translation means a conversion of one language to another, i.e., the faithful representation in one language of what is written or said in another language.

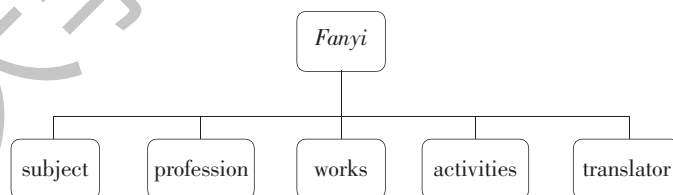
As a means of communication, translation plays an important role in human civilization. In the West, literary translation can be traced back to 300 B.C., while in China, recorded translation activities are even earlier, dating from the Zhou Dynasty (1100 B.C.). However, not until recent centuries, especially by the end of the 19th century did systematic study of translation get underway. In the past decades translation theories and activities have developed fast both at home and abroad.

Translation plays an even more important role in modern times and serves as a powerful tool to promote mutual understanding between peoples of different cultural and social backgrounds. A proper and dexterous translation is meaningful and appealing, easy to gain acceptance on the part of the reader, such as “humor” (幽默), “club” (俱乐部), “Coca Cola” (可口可乐), “hacker” (黑客), etc. Whereas a misunderstanding or improper rendering of words or expressions may lead to confusion, and sometimes even cause disasters. For instance, the mistranslation of the Japanese telegram sent to Washington just before the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, when “mokusatsu” (默殺) was allegedly translated as “ignored” instead of “considered”, and the ambiguity in UN Resolution 242, where “the withdrawal from occupied territories” was translated as “le retrait des territoires occupés”, and therefore as a reference to all of the occupied territory to be evacuated by the Israelis. Another example is the rendering of “Renaissance”. The original word refers to the period in Europe between the 14th and 17th centuries, when the art, literature, and ideas of ancient Greece were discovered again and widely studied, causing a rebirth of activity in all these things. It is commonly known as “文艺复兴” in Chinese via translation—although we know today this movement extended far beyond literature and art circles; actually the connotation of “Renaissance” is much more profound than that of the Chinese term. Similar fallacies also occur in C-E translation. For example, a popular Chinese brand of lipstick “芳芳” is translated as “Fangfang”, a hideous image in English—the English word “fang” happens to have two disagreeable definitions: a. a long, sharp tooth of a dog; b. a snake’s poisonous tooth. Similar translation blunders are not rare in domestic affairs, for instances, rendering “五讲四美、三热爱” into “five stresses, four beauties and three loves”; “抓紧施肥” into “grasp manure”; “街道妇女” into “street women”... Had the translators mastered enough translation knowledge, such blunders should have been avoidable.

II. Nature and Scope of Translation

What is translation? Some people believe it is a science, others take it as an art; and yet many consider it a craft, or rather, a skill.

Of these varied opinions, which one holds true for our purpose? The answer depends on how we understand or interpret the word “translation”, for the very word “translation” itself is ambiguous, and the Chinese equivalent “fanyi” sounds even fuzzier. “Fanyi” in Chinese, may either stand for a subject in the curriculum, a job or profession people are engaged in, a piece of literary work, or the translating or interpreting activities or profession. Sometimes, “fanyi” may even refer to the translator or interpreter himself/herself, as illustrated in the following diagram.



If the word “translation” refers to a subject, namely, the study of translation theory and skills, it is no doubt a science, just as any subject is, with its own rules and principles for translators to abide by; however, if it refers to some specific pieces of translation, then it is more like an art, with each piece manifesting its own charms and style by the creative work of the translator; whereas, if it refers to a process, in which something is translated, then we may regard it as a craft or a skill. For unlike any branch of natural science, the process of translation has its peculiarity, and none of its rules and principles is universally applicable. Besides, translation entails a lot of practice—particular craftsmanship and skills are displayed by the touches of different translators.

Translation covers a very broad range. In terms of languages, it can be divided into two categories: from native languages into foreign languages and vice versa. In terms of working mode, it can be divided into oral interpretation, written translation and machine translation. In terms of materials to be translated, there is translation of scientific materials, translation of literary works such as novels, stories, prose, poetry, drama, etc., translation of political essays such as treatises on social problems, reports, speeches, etc., and translation of practical writing such as official documents, contracts and agreements, notices, receipts, etc. In terms of a translator’s disposal, it can be either full-text translation (全文翻译), abridged translation (摘译) or adapted translation (编译).



III. Principles or Criteria of Translation

The so-named principles and criteria of translation are actually two aspects of the same thing. The former lays emphasis on the translator, who should follow these principles while translating; while the latter on the reader or critic, who may use the criteria to evaluate translation works. Whenever principles or criteria of translation are under discussion in China, Yan Fu's (严复) "three-character guide", which was first proposed in 1898, would be mentioned, namely, the principle of “信、达、雅” (faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance).

In the past decades, Yan Fu's principle of translation has been generally regarded as a yardstick to measure the professional level of translation and a goal for translators to strive after. However, in the application of this principle, many scholars come to see its limitations and at the same time, put forward some new standards instead.

Some scholars maintain the original three characters, and in the meantime add some new concepts to the character “雅”. According to them, “雅” means far more than the English word “elegance”. Apart from the traditional interpretation, it also means classicism, the adherence to the original style and flavor. On the other hand, other scholars argue that the word “雅” is out of place in translation. While adopting the first two characters of Yan Fu's principle, they discard the character “雅” and replace it with some other criteria. Noticeably, there are such revisions as “信、达、切” (faithfulness, expressiveness and closeness), “信、达、贴” (faithfulness, expressiveness and fitness), etc. Besides, some scholars disagree with Yan Fu's principle on the whole. By casting away the three-word guide, they propose some new principles or translation criteria of their own. Of the various popular theories “spiritual conformity” (神似) and “sublimed adaptation” (化境) are the most influential in the translation circles. The former, proposed by Fu Lei (傅雷), emphasizes the reproduction of the spirit or the flavor of the original, while the latter, advocated by Qian Zhongshu (钱钟书), focuses on the translator's smooth and idiomatic Chinese version for the sake of the Chinese reader.

Despite the variety of opinions, two criteria are almost unanimously accepted, i.e., the criterion of faithfulness/accuracy (忠实/准确) and that of smoothness (流畅). These two criteria may serve as our principles of translation in general. By faithfulness/accuracy, we mean being faithful not only to the original contents, to the original meaning and views, but also to the original form and style. By smoothness, we mean not only easy and readable rendering, but also idiomatic expression in the target language, free from stiff formula and mechanical copying from dictionaries.

IV. Literal Translation and Free Translation

The process of translation consists of two phases: comprehension and expression. Generally speaking, comprehension is of foremost importance, and expression is the natural consequence of thorough comprehension. However, in the practice of translation we may find that now and then some words in their usual senses are very difficult to deal with because of the disparity between the English and the Chinese languages. In this case, we have to resort to some special means of translation. Literal translation and free translation are two alternative approaches to tackle this problem.

Literal translation does not mean word-for-word translation. Superficially speaking, it means “not to alter the original words and sentences”; strictly speaking, it strives to keep the sentiments and style of the original. It takes sentences as its basic units and takes the whole text into consideration at the same time in the course of translation. Furthermore, it strives to reproduce both the ideological content and the style of the original works and retains as much as possible the figures of speech (比喻).

For example, the concept of “death” may be expressed as follows: breathe one’s last (断气), go to one’s eternal rest (安息), the long sleep (长眠), pass away (去世), see God (见上帝), see Marx (见马克思), see one’s ancestors (见祖先), go west (归西), go to heaven (进天国), kick the bucket (翘辫子, 蹬腿儿), etc. Actually, quite a lot of successful literal translations have been adopted as idiomatic Chinese expressions. For example, crocodile tears (鳄鱼的眼泪), be armed to the teeth (武装到牙齿), chain reaction (连锁反应), gentlemen’s agreement (君子协定), etc. Similarly, some Chinese words and expressions may also find their English counterparts through literal translation, for example, “三教九流” (the three religions and the nine schools of thought), “四书五经” (the Four Books and the Five Classics), “纸老虎” (paper tiger), “一国两制” (one country, two systems), etc.

Free translation is an alternative approach generally used to convey the meaning and spirit of the original text without trying to copy its sentence patterns or figures of speech. This approach is most frequently adopted when it is really impossible for the translator to translate the original meaning literally. For example:

- Adam’s apple 喉结
- rest room 公用厕所, 洗手间
- stopwatch 秒表, 跑表
- white wine 白葡萄酒
- It rains cats and dogs. 大雨滂沱。
- Do you see any green in my eye? 你以为我是幼稚可欺的吗?



- Don't cross the bridge till you get to it. 不必担心过早。Or: 不必自寻烦恼。

The above illustrations cannot be translated literally, otherwise, the Chinese rendition would either cause confusion or simply make no sense at all, let alone the original meaning.

More often than not, literal translation and free translation may be alternately used in the process of translation, as illustrated by the following examples from Practice of Relevant Skill of this unit:

- There's no pot so ugly it can't find a lid.

Literal translation: 再丑的罐儿也不愁配个盖儿。Or: 罐儿再丑, 配个盖儿不犯愁。

Free translation: 再丑的姑娘也不愁找不到婆家。Or: 丑女不愁嫁。

- Little fish does not eat big fish.

Literal translation: 小鱼吃不了大鱼。

Free translation: 胳膊拧不过大腿。

- What the tongue says, the neck pays for.

Literal translation: 舌头说话, 脖子还账。

Free translation: 舌头闯祸, 脖子遭殃。

- What was hatched a hen must not try to be a rooster!

Literal translation: 孵出来是只母鸡就别想冒充公鸡!

Free translation: 生就是个女人就别想冒充男人!

- A gift is the key to open the door closed against you.

Literal translation: 礼物是打开把你关在门外的房门钥匙。

Free translation: 大门把你关在外, 礼物送到门自开。

The above illustrations show clearly that literal translation and free translation are relative concepts. In other words, there is no absolute "literal", nor entirely "free" version in the practice of translation, and overemphasizing either of them would result in ridiculous consequences. Let's scrutinize the following two samples of translation excerpted from the reminiscences of Helen Snow.

Original English 1: I love *tiger cat*... British movies on public television, fluffy blouses, the *nuclear family*... (Helen Snow, *My China Years*)

Chinese Version A: 我爱虎猫……(爱)电视上放映的英国影片, 有绒毛的短衫, 核心家庭……

Chinese Version B: 我喜欢豹猫……喜欢公共电视台播放的英国电影, 喜欢蓬松柔软的棉毛衫, 喜欢一夫一妻制的家庭……

Comment: Apparently, both of these two Chinese versions leave much room for improvement.

In the first place, Version A and Version B literally render "tiger cat" respectively

as “虎猫” and “豹猫”. Actually, this species of wild animal has nothing to do with the family life. Consulting an English-English dictionary may shed light on the answer: tiger cat, a striped or sometimes blotched tabby cat (虎纹家猫 / 豹斑家猫).

Second, the phrase “nuclear family” is rendered as “核心家庭” by Version A and “一夫一妻制家庭” by Version B respectively. The former seems a bit too stiff, for most Chinese readers hardly have any idea of “核心家庭”. The latter, in contrast, seems to have gone too far as to distort the author’s original intention.

Therefore, neither of the above versions is desirable. A close examination of its definition in an English-English dictionary may reveal its true meaning: nuclear family, a family group that consists only of father, mother and children. Therefore, the proper rendering of the phrase should be worded to this effect: a cozy small family, namely, the Chinese equivalent “小家庭”.

Revised Version: 我喜欢虎纹家猫……爱看公共电视台播放的英国影片，爱穿蓬松的罩衫，爱过小家庭日子……

Original English 2: Mao Tse-tung was well bred, but inside he was made of steel, of hard resistance, of tough tissue—the kind of tissue the Boxers thought they had by magic, and bared their solar plexuses to foreign bullets. (Helen Snow, *My China Years*)

Chinese Version A: 毛泽东有很好的教养，内部是钢，有坚强的抗力，是由坚韧的材料制成的：这是义和团设想的由于神力具有的、可以把腹部袒露给外国人的子弹的那种材料。

Chinese Version B: 毛泽东教养有素，精神支柱铁铸钢打，不怕高压，是由坚韧的组织构成的。这种组织，就是义和团认为他们通过魔法得到的那种组织——袒胸露体，刀枪不入。

Comment: The word “tissue” can hardly be rendered into Chinese either in literal translation or free translation, nor could the metaphor “inside he was made of steel” be properly rendered without grasping the essence of the whole sentence. As we may see from the above, the former is stiffly rendered as “材料” and “组织”; the latter is freely rendered as “内部是钢” and “精神支柱铁铸钢打”—both fail to reflect the connotation of the original. By adopting translation skills such as amplification, omission, conversion and restructuring, we may revise the above Chinese versions as follows:

Revised Version: 毛泽东看似温文尔雅，实际上却是钢筋铁骨，坚韧不拔——从他身上可以看到当年义和团自信所具有的那种神力，面对洋枪洋炮也敢袒胸露怀。

Based on the above analysis, we can come to the conclusion that there is no obvious distinction between literal translation and free translation, nor is it necessary to distinguish



one from the other. The most crucial issue for a translator is to comprehend the original meaning thoroughly, and then put it into idiomatic Chinese. In the process of translation, specific approaches such as literal translation or free translation may be of some help, but we should avoid the two extremes. In the application of literal translation, we should endeavor to rid ourselves of stiff patterns and rigid adherence to translation rules, trying to be flexible; while in the practice of free translation, we should be cautious of subjectivity, avoiding groundless affirmation or arbitrary fabrication. Whatever the circumstances, we may alternate or combine these two approaches when it is necessary.

V. Translation Techniques

When it comes to translation techniques, we differ from those who tend to ignore them, or dismiss them lightly as something inconsequential. On the other hand, we should not exaggerate their function, and in no circumstances should we take them as almighty remedies.

Different kinds of materials to be translated entail different stresses in their rendition. Scientific materials stress their preciseness; novels and stories, their plots and characters; poetry, the emotion; document translation, the format and wording, etc.

Generally speaking, the basic translation techniques that merit our attention and are to be applied in E-C and C-E translation include: (1) diction (选词用字); (2) amplification (增添法); (3) omission (省略法); (4) repetition (重复); (5) conversion (转换); (6) restructuring (结构调整); (7) negation (正反调换); (8) division (长句拆译). Of course, there are different opinions on the labels of translation techniques. For example, some consider subordination a technique, assuming it to be an inseparable link in the process of comprehension; others do not consider repetition itself as a technique, categorizing it as amplification; while quite a few scholars add the disposal of the passive voice, the rendering of technical terms, the rendering of long sentences, etc. to translation techniques, which, in the eyes of others, are not techniques at all but methods or approaches in tackling specific problems. Regardless of these controversies, this textbook aims at taking all these practical means of translation into consideration. Besides, it also offers a brief comparative study and analysis of E-C and C-E translation. And in the following units we are going to elaborate these translation techniques and methods one by one.

Last but not least, translation techniques alone cannot guarantee faithful and smooth rendition—we may make use of them, but should not rely completely on them. Apart