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Project One

General Remark of Translation

Unit 1 Survey of Some Basic Notions of Translation



Work Task

By learning this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the importance of translation;
- identify definition, nature, scope and classification of translation;
- know the brief history, criteria and principles of translation;
- master the procedures of translation;
- know the competence of translators;
- have an idea of translating a business card.

A modern society sees an extensive use of translation on various occasions. As a medium of communication, which bridges the gulf between the different-tongue speakers, spreads the message to different corners of the world and passes on the culture to succeeding generations. It gives information, reveals feelings and affects people's thoughts or behaviors. A proper translation facilitates communication between people of different cultural backgrounds, while improper rendering of words and expressions may lead to confusion or misunderstanding.

Module 1

Translation Basic Knowledge Know How

I . Implication and Nature of Translation

Today few people may challenge the idea that there is no task more complex than translation. However, many will argue what translation actually is and to what degree on

earth a text can be translated effectively.

1. Definition of Translation

What is translation? There are many answers given by translation theorists both at home and abroad. Some of them are as follows:

A translation should give a complete transcript of the idea of the original work. The style and manner of writing should be of the same character as that of the original. A translation should have all the ease of the original composition. (A. F. Tytler; *Essay on the Principles of Translation*, 1791)

译文应完全复写出原作的思想。译文的风格和笔调应与原文的性质相同。译文应和原作同样流畅。(泰特勒,1791,英国)

Translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style. (Eugene. A. Nida & Charles R. Taber; *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 1969)

所谓翻译,是在译语中用最贴近的自然对等语再现原语的信息,首先是意义,其次是文体。(尤金·奈达,美国)

We would find more or less the same emphasis in some definitions raised by some Chinese translation scholars:

翻译是用一种语言把另一种语言所表达的思维内容准确而完整地重新表达出来的语言活动。(张培基,1980)

2. Classification of Translation

British linguist and translation theorist J. G. Catford classified translation according to its extent, levels and ranks like this:

2.1 In terms of the extent, it can be full and partial translation.

In a full translation the entire text is submitted to the translation process; that is, every part of the SL text is replaced by TL text material.

In a partial translation, some part or parts of the SL text are left untranslated; they are simply transferred to and incorporated in the TL text.

2.2 In terms of the levels, it can be total and restricted translation.

By total translation we mean what is most usually meant by 'translation'; that is, translation in which all levels of the SL text are replaced by TL material.

By restricted translation we mean: replacement of SL textual material by equivalent TL textual material, at only one level, that is translation performed only at the phonological or at the graph logical level, or at only one of the two levels of grammar and text is.

2.3 In terms of the rank of translation, it can be free, literal, and word-for-word.

A free translation is always unbounded—equivalences shunt up and down the rank

scale, but tend to be at the higher ranks—sometimes between larger units than the sentence. Word-for-word translation generally means essentially rank-bound at word-rank (but may include some morpheme-morpheme equivalences). Literal translation lies between these extremes.

3. The competence of translators

By the term “translator competence” we mean the underlying system of knowledge and skills needed in translation practice. In a section called “Basic Requirements of the Translator”, the American translation theorist Eugene Nida writes:

He (the translator) must understand not only the obvious content of the message, but also the subtleties of meaning, the significant emotive values of words and the stylistic features which determine the “flavor and feel” of the message. ... In other words, in addition to a knowledge of the two or more languages involved in the translational process, the translator must have a thorough acquaintance with the subject matter concerned.

To put it simply, translator competence falls into the following categories: bilingual competence, bicultural competence, a sense of responsibility and a keen insight.

II . A Brief Account of Translation History

In the west, translation began in the old Rome times and in the west Europe, the recorded translation can be dated to 250 B. C. The earliest historical documents recording sporadic translation activities in China can be traced back to Zhou Dynasty (1100 B.C.). The character “译” appeared as early as about 3,000 years ago. It was found in the Book of Rites (《礼记》).

1. Three Peaks of Translation in China’s History

1.1 The First Peak—The Translation of Buddhist Classics

Buddhism originated in India and began to penetrate into China in the middle of the first century. And the translation of Buddhist classics began in the late Eastern Han Dynasty (150 A. D.) and lasted more than 1,000 years till the Tang (618—907) and Northern Song Dynasties (960—1127), conducted mainly by Indian and Central Asian Buddhist monks as well as Chinese ones conversant in both the doctrines and Sanskrit.

As a diplomatic envoy, Zhang Qian (张骞) was once sent to Iran by Han emperor, and Buddhist scripture was translated and handed down till today from that time. In the Tang Dynasty, the Golden Age of translation, the famous translator was Tang monk—Xuan Zang (玄奘), who had been to India and stayed there for 17 years. Having returned home, he translated many books of Buddhism into Chinese.

1.2 The Second Peak—The Translation of Books on Science and Technology

The second peak, lasting for a span of 200 years, began in the late Ming and early

Qing Dynasties around the 17th century. With the arrival of many Jesuit missionaries from Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium and Poland, they had several hundred works, concerning science and technology, published in Chinese and China came into contact with the Western world gradually. During this period, the distinguished scientists Xu Guangqi (徐光启) and Li Zhizao (李之藻) played remarkable role in introducing Western science into China.

1.3 The Third Peak—The Translation of Western Classics

The Opium War and the signing of the first unequal Treaty of Nanjing ushered in the third peak of translation activity in China's history, lasting from the mid 19th century to May 4th Movement during which the western social sciences, military sciences, and literature entered China through translation. The quite influential persons in this period are Lin Zexu (林则徐), the respected national hero, Li Shanlan (李善兰), a leading mathematician, Lin Shu (林纾), a famous scholar and Yan Fu (严复), a great translator and famous professor. From May 4th movement to 1949 the new China built, there appeared many outstanding translators as well as writers such as Lu Xun, Mao Dun, Guo Moruo, Qu Qiubai, Lin Yutang and Fu Lei.

During this period of time, numerous well-known and important translation works were written such as *Evolution and Ethics* (《天演论》), *Inquiry into the Nature and Cause of the Wealth of Nations* (《原富》), *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (《共产党宣言》), *Das Capital* (《资本论》), *Arabian Nights* (《天方夜谭》), *Les Miserable* (《悲惨世界》), *Le Pere Goriot* (《高老头》), *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* (《基督山伯爵》), *Die Leiden des Jungen Werther* (《少年维特之烦恼》).

2. Translation in Present-day China

Translation in China has stepped into a new era since the founding of the New China. National and regional organizations for translators were established and translation work has been flourishing. To meet the demands of national social and economic construction, numerous scientific and technical books, a lot of literary works have been rendered into Chinese. There are many foreign magazines in various fields published such as: *Beijing Review*, *Chinese Literature*, *People's China*, and *Social Sciences in China*, *Chinese Medical Journal*, *China's Foreign Trade*, *Women of China*, *China's Sports*, *China Reconstructs* and *China Pictorial*.

III. The Criteria and Principles of Translation

1. The Discussion around Yan Fu's Criteria

In China, speaking of translation, we tend to think of Yan Fu's triple criteria, which he laid down as the following:

Translation has to do three difficult things: to be faithful, expressive and elegant.

For a translation to be faithful to the original is difficult enough, and yet if it is not expressive, it is tantamount to having no translation. Hence expressiveness should also be required.

The famous three-character standard for a good translation, namely, faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance, came into being, which has exerted such a profound influence upon generations of Chinese translators and translation theorists that in the past decades it has been regarded as the principle for measuring the quality of translation and guiding principle for people to be after.

2. Introduction of Western Theories

There have been many foreign translation principles introduced into China. As early as in 1791, Alexander Fraser Tytler put forward, in his *Essay on the Principles of Translation*, the principles of translation known as three fundamentals. They are:

➤ Translation should give a complete transcript of the idea of the original work. (译文应保全原作的思想)

➤ The style and manner of writing should be of the same character with that of the original. (译作的风格和笔调应与原作一致)

➤ The translation should have all the ease of the original composition. (译作应和原作一样流畅)

所谓翻译,是在译语中用最贴近的自然对等语再现原语的信息,首先是意义,其次是文体。

——尤金·奈达

3. The Principle Abided by

The meaning in translation is not a simple concept but contains conceptive meaning, contextual meaning, formal meaning, stylistic meaning, figurative meaning and cultural meaning.

3.1 Conceptive meaning

Conceptive meaning includes four levels—words, phrases, sentences and sentence groups. In terms of words, conceptive meaning is the meaning of words; in terms of sentence, it is the meaning of the whole sentence. Obviously, it is very important to understand the conceptive meaning. Otherwise, the translator will not be able to correctly decode the original information.

e. g. On the wall of a church in England there is a sign that says, “A vision without a task is but a dream, a task without a vision is drudgery, a vision and a task are the hope of the world.”

The key point of translating this sentence is the conceptive meaning of the words “vision” and “task”. No matter which word you use, it should be able to show the

relative meanings of these two words—the foresight of the future and the real hard work.

在英格兰一座教堂的墙上,有这样一段话:“没有行动的计划不过是梦想,没有计划的行动只能是徒劳,计划与行动并举才是世界的希望。”

3.2 Contextual meaning

We can understand contextual meaning in two aspects. On one hand, it is the meaning in a specific linguistic context. The linguistic context adjusts the conceptive meaning of words thus giving it some associated meaning. For example, “国际影响” can be translated into “international influence” or “international reputation” in different contexts. On the other hand, contextual meaning is the meaning in specific social context, which means the factors like communicative aim, place and the receiver entitle the words new emotions, moods and implications.

e. g. Jane knew they were telling the truth. Her mother could be a bitch sometimes, but Geneva loved her grandchildren. She just had a strange way of showing it.

You cannot simply translate the word “bitch” into “母狗”. The context here is Jane's children don't want to go to their Grandma's and say Grandma always yells at them and restricts their freedom. In this way, we should consider it carefully in translation.

简知道他们说的是实话,她妈妈有时候确实很可恶,不过基尼娃很疼自己的外孙,只是表达方式有些怪而已。

3.3 Formal meaning

Formal meaning is an inalienable part of linguistic semiotics. And any conceptive meaning must be expressed in a certain form to make it something appreciable. Formal meaning refers to the feature of the forms of words, sentences and passage. For instance, the fixed structures of poems and idioms entitle it obvious formal meaning, which cannot be changed casually.

e. g. diamond cut diamond 棋逢对手

另有企图 to have an axe to grind

谷雨前后,种瓜点豆。Around Grain Rain, grow melons and peas.

3.4 Stylistic meaning

Stylistic meaning is the meaning expressed through the style of the original, including the stylistic features and the author's writing style. Stylistic meaning is a high-level meaning, so in translation, the translator should try to realize the stylistic equivalence.

e. g. Loving God, we ask for your strength and guidance for those we love. Help us always to remember how important it is to pray for them. Amen.

This is a prayer to God, so the style is very serious and formal.

慈爱的主啊,请指引我们所爱的人,给他们以力量,让我们永远记住要为他们祈祷。阿门。

e. g. Let me tell you something. If you are not there in two fucking seconds, when I'm done with them, you are the next.

The style of this sentence is totally different from last one. It is very informal and casual.

你听好了,你两秒钟之内不给我过去,等我收拾完他们,就该你了。

3.5 Figurative meaning

Figurative meaning refers to the imaginative meaning of words, i. e. rhetoric meaning. It refers to the development and transformation of literal meaning of a word. As this usage can express more effectively, it's better to remain its figurative form in translation.

e. g. Japan's recent history is littered with corpse of reformers, swept in on a wave of hope only to be swept out again when those hopes were dashed.

在近代日本政治史中,改革者的尸体随处可见。改革者们乘着希望的波涛而来,碰得粉身碎骨,然后被现实的浪潮席卷而去。

e. g. Although Tanaka resigned as prime minister after a scandal in 1974, he continued to pull the strings behind the scenes.

1974 年的一桩丑闻迫使田中辞去了首相的职务,不过他仍然是幕后的操纵者。

3.6 Cultural meaning

Cultural meaning refers to the ethnic culture and mentality showed through language. Translators should pay special attention to the cultural information in the SL, otherwise it will lead to the loss of cultural meaning in the intercultural communication. So, cultural meaning is becoming more and more important in the global village.

e. g. “心里正在想着他,他就来了!”秦守本搓着手掌说。

“嘴说曹操,曹操就到!”熟悉戏文的安兆丰接着说。《红日》

“I was just thinking about him and here he is!”

“Talking about Cao Cao and he is sure to appear.”

e. g. 阿庆嫂,我刁小三有眼不识泰山,你宰相肚里能撑船,别跟我一般见识啊。《沙家浜》

I have eyes, but can't see Mount Tai, while you have the heart of a statesman, big enough to hold a boat. I'm sure you won't let yourself sink to my level.

e. g. “You know, I envy you with your own little business. You're your own boss, you can keep the hours you like, you can...”

“Don't you believe it! I'm more tied down than you are. If I take time off, I lose money and customers. I envy you all your vacation leave, public holidays...”

“I guess the grass is always greener on the other side.”

“我真羡慕你有自己的小生意,自己当老板,自己安排时间,自己……”

“你真这么想吗?我才不如你那么自在呢。我都不能休息,要不然钱和顾客都跑了。我还羡慕你呢,那么多节假日……”

“看来青草总是别人的绿呀。”

Module 2 Linking up: Practice of Relevant Skill

In this unit we discussed “faithfulness” and “consistency”. Check the following translations by using these skills, and point out the reasons for ambiguous versions, then give the proper ones.

1. 蚂蚁上树 过桥米线 霸王别姬

【English version】

ants climbing trees

rice crossing a bridge

emperor bidding farewell to his concubine

【Remarks】The English translation version is literal, which disobeys faithfulness. So it may confuse foreigners. It had better be changed as:

rice noodles with minced pork

rice noodles

broiled chicken cutlets with turtle

2. 感谢您在6月4日的报价,并希望您能在本月底以前供货。

100令A2印刷纸,白色,包括运费在内,每公斤5美元。

【English version】Thanks you for your quotation of 4 June and shall be glad if you will supply, for delivery not later than the end of the month:

100 reams of A2 quality Printing Paper, White, at \$ 5/kg, including delivery.

【Remarks】Seemingly, the English version is faithful to original context. Generally speaking, dollar (\$) is 美元. But “dollar” is the monetary unit in many countries, like:

Hong Kong Dollar 港币

Canadian Dollar 加拿大元

Australian Dollar 澳大利亚元

Singapore Dollar 新加坡元

New Zealand Dollar 新西兰元

US Dollar 美元

It's ambiguous to translate “美元” into “\$”. So adapted translation should be:

Thanks you for your quotation of 4 June and shall be glad if you will supply, for delivery not later than the end of the month:

100 reams of A2 quality Printing Paper, White, at \$ US 5/kg, including delivery.

Module 3 Building up more skills: Business Card

Business card is also called name card, visiting card, calling card or card. It is a kind of introductory cards for convenient interpersonal contacts with the holder's name, identification, position, etc. Therefore it is indispensable to show personal identification in business activities.

How to design the card well?

1. The structure of name card:

Name of the business;

Holder's name;

Holder's position or one's title of technical post;

Address;

Contact information;

More possible information: business covering, business motto/logo, A/C No. (Banking Account Number), etc.

2. Translation of the business title

Mostly, a work unit has a conventional translation and you can get it through a little checking. For example, 中国银行 is "Bank of China" and its shortened form is "B. O. C.". It can not be translated as "the Chinese Bank" or "the China Bank". For another example, the well known "狗不理" is regularly translated into "Go-Believe" which means "integrity (诚信)". "Firm" always refers to the small business unit and translated into "商号"、"公司"、"事务所". "Agency" is the business entity acting on behalf of someone in a responsible position.

More examples:

People's Insurance Company of China 中国人民保险公司

Microsoft Corporation 微软公司

General Incorporation 通用联合公司

Consulting Firm 咨询公司

Law Firm 律师事务所

China Ocean Shipping Agency 中国外轮代理总公司

Zhongxing Stores 中兴百货公司

China Express Service(s) 中国快递服务公司

Beijing Airlines 北京航空公司

3. The English name and its translation

The English name consists of given name, middle name and family name. For

example, George Walker Bush(乔治·沃克·布什). George is given name, Walker is middle name and Bush is family name. But the middle name is often shortened as W. So the former American president is called “George W. Bush (乔治·W. 布什)”.

4. The Chinese name and its translation

Generally, family name goes first and the given name second in Chinese, it's written in Pinyin, two words with both capitalized, and three words with the first two capitalized. If it is a double family name, only the first one capitalized. Such as, 刘艺红 can be written as Liu Yihong, 姚明 as Yao Ming, and 欧阳丽娟 is Ouyang Lijuan.

5. The translation of post

In terms of post, it is complicated. There are many expressions and the most used are as the following:

董事长:chairman, president

总裁:CEO

总经理:General Manager

名誉主席:Honorary Chairman

代厂长:Acting Factory Director

副职:Vice, Deputy, Associate, Assistant

①Vice-常与 president, chairman, chancellor 等表示较高职位的词连用

②Deputy 主要用来表示企业、事业及行政部门的副职

e. g. Deputy Marketing Director

Deputy Chairman of the club

③Associate 主要用来表示技术职称副职

e. g. Associate Professor 副教授

Associate Research Fellow 副研究员

Associate Chief Physician 副主任医师

④Assistant 主要用来表示助理

e. g. Assistant Engineer 助理工程师

Assistant Research Fellow 助理研究员

Assistant Manager 助理经理

6. The translation of address

In Chinese, the sequence of address is from the small places to big places. But in English, it reverses.

e. g. 上海市崇明县中兴镇 Zhongxing Town, Chongming County, Shanghai

内蒙古自治区呼伦贝尔盟 Hulunbeir Prefecture, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region

Transliteration, literal translation, and free translation are the main approaches for address translation. Sometimes these can be combined.

e. g. New York 纽约, Wall Street 华尔街, Chicago 芝加哥

Iceland 冰岛, Pearl Harbor 珍珠港

New Zealand 新西兰, Port Victoria 维多利亚港

Module 4

Reflections and Practice—Do it yourself

I. Discuss the following questions.

1. What is the nature of translation?
2. What is literal translation? What is free translation?
3. What do you know about translation techniques? Please name a few of them and try to cite some examples.

II. Translate the following words and phrases.

From English to Chinese

1. soft drink
2. escort service
3. exclusive shop
4. Love Outreach
5. settle accounts
6. snack bar
7. side-walk snack stall
8. most needy family
9. bulk sale store
10. risk one's fortune in the sea of business

From Chinese to English

1. 打的
2. 大款
3. 上网
4. 跳槽
5. 小金库
6. 步行街
7. 商品房
8. 按揭
9. 红包
10. 时装表演

III. Translate the following sentences into Chinese using either literal or free translation.

1. It is easy to dodge a spear in the open, but difficult to guard against an arrow shot from hiding.

2. His father a powerful man—has long hands—reaches as far as he can.
3. Every life has its roses and thorns.
4. She'd never again believe anything in trousers.
5. After the failure of her last novel, her reputation stands on slippery ground.

IV. Put the following sentences into English, using either literal or free translation.

1. 一个和尚挑水吃,两个和尚抬水吃,三个和尚没水吃。
2. 有意栽花花不开,无心插柳柳成荫。
3. 近朱者赤,近墨者黑。
4. 解铃还需系铃人。
5. 授人以鱼,不如授人以渔。

V. Design name cards according to the given information.

1.

姓名: 张晓岚
工作单位: 中国工商银行
工作部门: 人力资源处
职务: 副处长
地址: 天津市和平区学府路科学大厦 B 座
9012 室
邮编: 300011
电话:
传真:
电子邮件:

2.

姓名: 黄舒晨
工作单位: 华南理工大学
工作部门: 外语系
职务: 主任
地址: 广州市天河区山前大道 408 号
邮编: 510600
电话:
传真:
电子邮件: