

英 汉
翻 译 手 册

A Handbook
of Translation

钟 述 孔 著

商 务 印 书 馆

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A HANDBOOK OF TRANSLATION

—with 20-odd Drills, involving some 300 sentences,
on Sentence Translation and 50 Exercises of Pas-
sage Translation on a fairly large variety of themes

英 汉 翻 译 手 册

钟 述 孔 著

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作者的话

翻译,作为革命机器中的“齿轮”,是一项重要工作,在我们的革命和建设事业中起着积极的、重要的作用。

建国以来,我国的翻译工作做出了突出的成绩。以汉译英为例,《毛泽东选集》的一卷至五卷英译本,就是高水平的代表作。同时,在英译汉方面,各条战线上的翻译工作同志也积累了很多宝贵的经验。

本书作者从事过二十多年的翻译实践,积累了一些经验和体会。我们的一个比较突出的体会是,翻译的过程,应当是运用唯物辩证法分析矛盾、解决矛盾的过程。首先,需要通过分析的方法,认真抓好对原文的正确“理解”;这是翻译工作中的唯物论。译文究竟是正确的,还是犯了“机械主义”或“自由主义”的毛病,首先取决于是否对原著有正确的“理解”。就翻译的具体过程而言,矛盾确实不少,但我们觉得主要矛盾是译者(个人或集体)的“理解”与“表达”之间的矛盾。在从事翻译时,首先遇到的主要矛盾的主要方面,是译者对原著的“理解”是否确切。这就要求我们“钻进去”,采取分析的方法,把原文“吃透”。第二步,在求得准确理解之后,主要矛盾的主要方面常常就转化为“充分表达”这个环节了;这就要求我们“跳出来”,用另一种语言把原著的精神实质表达出来,使译文既忠于原义、又符合所译语言的习惯用法,力求达到内容与形式的统一。同时,在分析和探索“充分表达”的过程中,往往反过来又可以加深对原著的“理解”。所有这些,都反映了翻译中

的辩证法。

我们还切身体会到,要产生出高质量的译文,决不是轻而易举的事;相反,这是很困难的一项任务。好的翻译工作者,如同其它战线的同志一样,也需要坚持“实践出真知”的根本观点,努力用辩证唯物论指导自己的实践。还必须下苦功在实践中遵循周总理的指示,“打好三个基本功”,即政治基本功,语言(汉语和有关外语)基本功,及知识基本功。

本书就是试图就英汉、汉英翻译中的“理解”与“表达”如何求得辩证的统一,就抓好“理解”与“表达”的基本方法问题和基本翻译技巧,进行了一些典型分析,并且为此设计和汇编了三百来个典型翻译例句,以及五十篇涉及不同题材的“篇章”翻译练习。中心的意思,是希望读者通过阅读和分析本书各章节的典型例句,特别是通过亲自动手翻译上述几十个练习,自己体会和掌握翻译中的一些基本规律和基本技巧,为今后在实践中不断提高翻译的质量,打下一个相当扎实的基础。

根据周总理生前关于抓好“三个基本功”的指示,我们还深深体会到,除了打好“政治基本功”、把心扑在工作上之外,打好“知识基本功”,不断扩大知识面,也很重要。否则,如果知识面太窄,是难以适应新时期的总任务、难以真正做好翻译工作的。最后一个十分重要之点,是打好“外语基本功”。以汉语与英语为例,这是两种完全不同的语言;作为中国同志,我们只有通过经常不断地、用心地阅读、分析和钻研各种有关体裁的原著,经常勤于动笔,不断提高英语水平,才能在翻译中较好地发挥我们汉语方面的长处,在翻译中更好地实现“理解”与“表达”的辩证的统一。同时,我们还认为,如果对英语没有一定的掌握,是不能真正产生出质量较高的译文的,特别是汉译英的译文。这也就是说,一定要努力提高外语水平,要

扎扎实实地打“三个基本功”。只有这样，才能从根本上提高翻译质量。从这个意义上说，目前我国的大专院校最好是到了高年级才进行系统的翻译训练；否则，往往会产生“中文式的英文”或“欧化汉语”，或养成把一个英文词汇与一个中文词汇机械地“划等号”等等坏习惯。因此，本书是用英文编写的；服务对象是我国外事部门、科技战线年轻的在职翻译工作人员，教育战线年轻的英语教员和业余的年轻翻译爱好者，以及大专院校高年级的学生。

本书在编写过程中曾得到不少同志的帮助，谨在此表示诚挚的谢意。由于作者的实践有很大的局限性、知识水平也很有限，敬希广大读者多提意见，多予指正。

作者

一九七八年九月 于北京

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Chapter I. Prerequisites for Translation

(I) The Importance of Translation in our Revolutionary Cause

I-1-1:

Translation, essentially, is the faithful representation, in one language, of what is written or said in another language. Yet in the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolution, translation has an important role to play.

Chairman Mao says, "*The salvoes of the October Revolution brought us Marxism-Leninism.*" This means it was through the Russian revolutionaries that the Chinese progressives found the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism. The October Revolution helped progressives in China, as throughout the world, to adopt the proletarian world outlook as the instrument for studying a nation's destiny and considering anew their own problems. Then, the Chinese people began to enter an entirely new era in their thinking and life, and the face of China began to change. To bring about this great change, *translation* has played an important part as "cog and wheel" in the whole revolutionary machine.

Now, the overthrow of the "gang of four" and the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution has ushered in a *new period* of development in China's socialist revolution

and construction. In this new period, as Chairman Hua teaches us, the GENERAL TASK facing the Chinese people *"is firmly to carry out the line of the 11th Party Congress, and transform China into a great and powerful socialist country with modern agriculture, industry, national defence and science and technology by the end of the century."* Chairman Hua further teaches us that the accomplishment of the four modernizations in less than a quarter of a century in our socialist country is *"the magnificent task history has placed on our shoulders."* And in this magnificent task, too, translation has a very important part to play.

I-1-2:

Indeed, domestically and internationally, translation plays an increasingly important role in our revolutionary cause — an increasingly important role in promoting mutual understanding between the world's people, in "knowing the enemy and knowing ourselves", in contributing to the speeding up of the four modernizations, in spreading Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, and in promoting the just cause of opposing hegemonism and safeguarding international peace and security.

(II) Strive to Be Both Red and Expert

I-2-1:

Translation, as "cog and wheel" in the whole revolutionary machine, requires that *our* translators should strive

to be both *red and expert* — strive for the “integration of being red with being expert”.

As we see it, a good translator is one who is *dedicated to the revolutionary work* and is *good at learning*. He knows what he works for — always working for the interests of the vast majority of China and the world. He has a strong sense of duty — he is most *particular about being conscientious* and is fully aware that a “careless mistake” in translation can lead to a political mistake or bring economic losses to our country and people. He is good at learning because, taught by the Party, he is convinced that “*We are confronted with arduous tasks and our experience is far from adequate. So we must be good at learning.*” He has, moreover, a constant urge to improve his tools — the languages he has to use in translation; as he knows the plain truth that every good worker has got to constantly sharpen his tools and always keep them in good order.

I-2-2:

On this problem of “tool”, perhaps, it is not impertinent to say a few more words here.

Language, as we all know, is a product of *society*, born and developed as a means to facilitate *communication* in the course of the struggle for production, class struggle and scientific experiment. TRANSLATION is work that involves at least *two languages* — the “first language” (which, in our case, is Chinese) and the “second language” (which, in our case, is English). Therefore, to *know both languages* fairly well is one of the prerequisites for translation. In this connection, we have to bear always in mind that Chinese

and English are *two entirely different languages*, each having its own usage and idiom, its own grammar and stylistic devices, its own cultural and *social background*. (And we'll have to come *back* to this point from time to time.) Moreover, we have to bear always in mind that "*The mastery of language is not easy and requires painstaking effort.*"

Experience has led us to believe that "painstaking effort" in this context means an enormous amount of *practice* in as many useful forms as possible.

I-2-3:

Being native speakers of the Chinese language we have, by the time we are, say, 20 years old, been *exposed to a wide variety of linguistic experiences*, as far as the Chinese language is concerned. In other words, when we are past twenty, normally we have already acquired a good degree of *competence* in "production", i.e. in expressing ideas in idiomatic Chinese. This is normally *our strong point*. However, the same cannot be said of our knowledge of English. For the Chinese comrades who learn English in China, to acquire a good command of English requires a *constant exposure* to as wide a variety of linguistic experiences as possible. This means they have to do a lot of reading, listening and speaking. They have to *experience* the many ways in which English is written and spoken by *native speakers*. And, to *be constantly exposed to English spoken and written by native speakers* is rightly considered to be a very, very important part of *practice*, without which a Chinese learner of English cannot expect to acquire competence in "understanding" and "production" as far as the

English language is concerned.

I-2-4:

Furthermore, there is always the problem of *the subject matter* involved in translation. For instance, if we are called upon to translate documents on a specific boundary question, even if we have a fairly good command of the languages involved we can hardly do the work well *unless* we have acquired some knowledge of the historical background, our Government's policy vs. the position of the foreign country concerned, the point at issue, the basic geographical features of the relevant boundary areas, etc. Similarly, if we are given the task to translate some technological data on remote sensing of the earth by man-made satellites, we have to learn to acquire some basic knowledge of the relevant aspect of space science and technology.

I-2-5:

In a nutshell, in order to achieve *genuine* (not feigned) *competence* in translation, we in China must *eliminate* the pernicious influence of the "doctrine of immediate effect" peddled by Lin Piao and the "gang of four". We must bear in mind that TRANSLATION, too, means *honest, solid knowledge*, allowing not an iota of falsehood, and that *genuine knowledge comes from practice*. We must, in the final analysis, follow conscientiously the *instructions* given by our respected and beloved Premier Chou En-lai — to strengthen our "basic training" in the *three essential aspects*: the *enhancement* of our *political consciousness*, the *betterment* of our *command* of the relevant *languages*, and the *broadening* of the range and scope of our *general knowledge*.

Chapter II. Dialectical-Materialism in Translation

(I) The Correct Approach to Translation

II-1-1:

Taching, China's red banner on the industrial front, has aptly epitomized its basic experience in one sentence — "Relying on Chairman Mao's two essays for guidance" (i.e. Chairman Mao's essays ON PRACTICE and ON CONTRADICTION).

Guided by ON PRACTICE, the people of Taching Oil Fields have consistently followed the principle "Practice, knowledge, practice again, and again knowledge". They drill wells, sum up experience, improve the methods and machinery; drill more, sum up again, make more improvements — thus greatly pushing up production and scaling new heights in scientific experiment and technological know-how. Guided at the same time by ON CONTRADICTION, the Taching people have consciously applied *the law of the unity of opposites* to analysing and solving contradictions. In studying any process in which there are two or more contradictions, they always devote every effort to identifying its principal contradiction and then to creating the necessary conditions to transform *difficulties* into their opposites — into successes. Hence their slogan: "When conditions exist, go ahead; when they don't, create them and go ahead!"

II-1-2:

Indeed Taching's basic experience is applicable to translation, a process wherein "relying on Chairman Mao's two essays for guidance" has been proved to be of great importance.

First, there is the question of *practice*. It is inconceivable that one can become a good translator or interpreter without devoting painstaking effort to practice. Moreover, there is the question of applying "the law of the unity of opposites": the question of analysing *contradictions*, of grasping the principal contradiction, of transforming difficulties into their opposites — into successes. What is essential is *a dialectical approach*, which has been proved by practice to be the *correct approach*. In a word, in translation, as in any other kind of revolutionary work, we must act according to dialectical materialism.

II-1-3:

Speaking of translation, some people in China tend to think of Yen Fu's "three-character guide", namely: "faithfulness (信), expressiveness (达) and elegance (雅)". This is one school of thought in translation — a school which does not solve *practical* problems. If, for instance, an article or a statement *is* full of groundless charges against China or *is* deliberately couched in insolent terms—how can we expect the translator to render it into an "*elegant*" piece in the target language? In fact, as one of Lu Hsun's friends put it in early December 1931, by demanding "elegance" Mr. Yen Fu virtually ruled out "faithfulness" and

“expressiveness”. Lu Hsun, China’s great revolutionary writer, expressed explicit disapproval of this so-called “three-character guide”. He placed “faithfulness” above everything else. On 28 December 1931, replying to Comrade J. K’s letter, Lu Hsun wrote: “Rather be faithful than smooth” (“宁信而不顺”). Lu Hsun’s translation is precisely marked by *faithfulness*, the attainment of which is, in fact, a convincing proof of the mastery of the two languages involved — the language to be translated from and the language to be translated into. Following his example, we should strive to achieve *faithfulness*, without which a translator would *err* either by taking a “liberal” approach or a “mechanical” approach.

II-1-4:

To illustrate, let us examine two examples of Chinese-English translation, one of them being too “liberal” and the other too “mechanical”:

Example A: “其中有些人是两面派,有些人是被迫的,又有些人是一时之错,……” “Among these some are *of two minds*, others are *working under pressure* and still others have merely *made a momentary slip*, ...”

Comment: In this version, the sentence is grammatically correct. Besides, “be of two minds”, “working under pressure” and “make a momentary slip” are all *idiomatic* English expressions. This shows the translator has a fairly good command of English. But he fails to grasp the real *meaning* — to get a *correct comprehension* — of the original! Furthermore, he seems to have neglected the *context* (only by basing himself on the *context* can a translator

solve correctly the “choice of words”). As a result, this version is *not faithful* to the original and *cannot* be regarded as correct, however “smooth” or “elegant” it may appear to be. A careful study of the *context* would enable us to see (i) that this part of the original work is an analysis based on “an investigation of one local government” where out of 1,300 staff members “only 40 to 50, or less than 4 per cent, were confirmed anti-Communists” while all the rest wanted national unity and resistance to Japanese aggression; (ii) that the original work points out emphatically, in the context, that our policy must be one of unity with “all those who are not absolutely set in their capitulation and anti-Communism” — all those, including “其中有些人是两面派，有些人是被迫的，又有些人是一时之错”。 With this *essence and spirit* of the original work correctly grasped, a translator is in a position to bring his knowledge of English into full play. Indeed, with this *context* in mind, we can better appreciate the following good translation in the PFLP (Peking Foreign Languages Press) version: — “some *face both ways*, others are *acting under compulsion*, and still others have *temporarily gone astray* (for the sake of continued unity and resistance we must win over all these people).”

II-1-5:

Example B: “语言这个东西，不是随便可以学好的，非下苦功不可。” “Language is something difficult to learn well, to learn it well one has to study very hard.”

Comment: In this *context*, to render “学好语言” into “learn a language well” and to translate “下苦功” into “study