

外语教学指导与学术研究系列丛书

外国语言与文化研究

顾 钢 主编



 北京理工大学出版社
BEIJING INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY PRESS

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序 言

“优质、高效、求新、务实”是天津师范大学外国语学院的教学宗旨。为学生提供优质高效的教学服务是我们必须达到的基本标准。科研工作和学科建设是实现优质高效教学的关键，教师只有通过科研活动才能不断提高对教学规律的理性认识，从教学的必然王国进入自由王国。2003年9月，我们开始了“教学特区”的建设，进一步强化了教师的科研意识，建立了鼓励科研的制度，大大激发了教师从事科研工作的积极性。2004年2月，学院首届学术年会召开，大部分教师都在年会上宣读了论文，对各自的科研工作进行了总结和展示。这些论文涉及了外语教学相关的各个主要领域和议题，为我们搞好外语教学和研究提供了新的视点和议题，对增强学院办学水平和竞争力将起到非常积极的作用。

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2004年4月

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Pragmatic Meaning in Translation

冯志静

【Abstract】 The interdisciplinary transplation is the main route to the development of modern science. And it is the same case with translation. As Leo Hickey says in his book *The Pragmatics of Translation* (2001:1): “certain aspects of language, such as words and grammar, appear to disappear or change completely in translation and yet the ‘meaning’, ... usually survives the process quite well”. This paper aims to address this issue at the pragmatic level. In general, pragmatic approaches attempt to explain translation-procedure, process and product from the point of view of what is (potentially) done by the original author in or by the text, what is (potentially) done in the translation as a response to the original, how and why it is done in that way in that context. (Hickey, 2001:10) So it can explain the process of meaning transfer better.

【Key Words】 pragmatic meaning pragmatics principle of relevance optimal relevance
recontextualisation

Pragmatics “is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader)” (Yule, 1996: 3). So pragmatics associates the meaning of language itself with their users. Take the word “dog” for example. Besides its reference to a kind of animal, in some circumstances, it can be used by the speaker to warn or threat the listener. This kind of meaning is beyond the words, but it is the purpose of the speaker’s using of a language.

In 1975, H.P. Grice put forward the idea that meaning is intention. So in this paper, we define pragmatic meaning as the speaker’s intention, also known as the force of an utterance. It equals Searle’s definition of illocutionary force, that is, the illocutionary force of an utterance — its most salient pragmatic purpose — is the performative intention which the utterance serves. (Hickey, 2001: 11). Thomas once gave an example to illustrate his point: “Suppose someone says to you: ‘Is that your car?’” On the condition that there isn’t any ambiguity of sense or reference in the context where the question is asked, there are still so many explanations of the force behind the question that you might be confused about. It might be an expression of admiration or scorn for your car; or it might be a complaint that your car is in the way; or it even might be a request that you give him a lift (Thomas, 1995: 18). These possibilities listed above are all the different pragmatic meanings that the same utterance might have and the possible communicative intentions of the speaker. So the pragmatic meaning, in this paper, refers to the speaker’s communicative intention.

The importance of pragmatic meaning

The psychologist, Miller was one of the first people to point out the significance of a speaker’s intention:

Most of our misunderstandings of other people are not due to any inability to hear them or parse their sentences or understand their words. A far more important source of difficulty in communication is that we often fail to understand a speaker's intention (Thomas, 1995: 18).

Studies show that what people pay attention to and react to in linguistic communication is the intention (杨忠, 李清和, 1995: 12). Let's see the following conversation between two secretaries in an office:

A: Are you going to be here long?

B: You can go if you like.

A: I'll be just out on the porch. Call me if you need me.

B: OK.

We can see that B directly responds to A's intention, or pragmatic meaning, rather than the literal meaning. This proves that pragmatic meaning is the focus information in linguistic communication.

Nida (1977) put forward a famous idea: "Translating is communicating." So the great importance of pragmatic meaning in translation is beyond doubt. Translation is, after all, a form of language use, a kind of verbal communication, and the success of communication depends on the identification of the other's intention. To achieve the equivalence of pragmatic meaning is the 1st priority in translation.

When human beings communicate, they perform acts that fall into the range of what other human beings, even those from vastly different cultural backgrounds, are in principle capable of empathizing with. At this level of meaning, the universality between different languages plays the dominant role and thus makes the translation possible. That's to say the translatability between languages is the biggest at this level. In this sense, pragmatic meaning can overcome the cultural differences between different languages and thus realize the communication between the SL sender and TL receiver.

In essence, translation is pragmatic and communicative (赵彦春, 1999: 287). Translation must meet one requirement at least: to guarantee the success of communication (赵彦春, 1999: 273). So the translator must, first of all, guarantee the transfer of pragmatic meaning.

The transfer of pragmatic meaning

Relevance theory and translation

Relevance theory put forward by Sperber & Wilson, though not meant for translation, is powerful in accounting for "the most complex thing in the history of the cosmos" (Richard, 1953). In this paper, it provides us with a general guideline for the handling of pragmatic meaning — when to make it explicit and when to keep it implicit?

Principle of relevance:

"Every act of ostensive communication communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance." (Guff, 1991: 30)

The basic idea of relevance theory is optimal relevance, which means the hearer is expected to interpret an utterance at minimal processing cost but with adequate contextual effects (Gutt, 1991:

30).

Contextual effects can be of three kinds. There are contextual effects if contextual implications can be derived; or if previous assumptions are strengthened or confirmed; or even eliminated due to a contradiction (Gutt, 1991: 27).

According to Sperber & Wilson, the crucial mental faculty that enables human beings to communicate with one another is the ability to draw inferences from people's behaviors. Seen from the communicator's end, his task is to produce a stimulus—verbal or otherwise—from which the audience can infer what he 'means', or in terms of relevance theory, what his informative intention is (Guff, 1999: 21). "—communication is an asymmetrical process, where more responsibility lies with the communicator than with the audience" (Guff, 1991: 32).

It is the communicator's responsibility to make correct assumptions about the linguistic and contextual information which the hearer will have access to and be likely to use when interpreting an utterance. He also has the responsibility to avoid misunderstanding on the part of the hearer, so that the comprehension of the hearer is facilitated and all he has to do is go ahead and use whatever linguistic and contextual information that comes most easily to mind (Sperber & Wilson, 1986: 43).

As one form of communication, translation is primarily an ostensive-inferential cognitive process (赵彦春, 1999: 273). Likewise, a translator should first of all find out the implicature from the explicature of the ST communicator by means of all the communication clues available at all levels and then by inferring the cognitive environment of the audience choose from the various potential versions the optimally relevant one, which thus can best help the audience infer the image or message intended by the ST communicator. This rule of optimal relevance is believed to be able to match, to the greatest possible extent, the communicator's intention with the target text audience's expectation.

According to the relevance theory, we don't need to make everything implicit explicit. If the audience can infer the pragmatic meaning from his cognitive environment, then the pragmatic meaning can be left implicit. However, the belief that illocutionary functions can be comprehended across the most diverse cultural boundaries does not extend to suppose that the cross-cultural appraisal of illocutionary functions is easy. On the contrary, cultural relativity makes this a highly sensitive and problematic issue (Hickey, 2001: 11). So sometimes it involves substituting the SL cognitive environment with the TL cognitive environment because of the cultural barrier, which results in the irrelevance of the TL cognitive environment that produces the intended effect. In this way, the TL reader can still infer the intended pragmatic meaning as the SL reader.

Example 1:

He was so fond of talking that his colleagues nicknamed him "magpie".

In the cognitive environment of the English reader "magpie" symbolizes being garrulous, so the pragmatic meaning of the word is that he was too garrulous. However, this cognitive environment doesn't exist in the Chinese reader's mind. "—that hearers will naturally start out with those contextual assumptions that are most easily accessible to them" (Guff, 1991: 2). In this case, in the Chinese readers' cognitive environment, "magpie" is associated with gook luck, which is not

relevant to being garrulous. The claim to optimal relevance leads the hearer to accept the first interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance and the right, that is, the speaker-intended interpretation (Hickey, 2001: 44). Hence there appears the misunderstanding. The translator must find optimally relevant contextual information for the Chinese reader. Therefore, it is translated as:

他如此唠叨，同事们给他起了个“麻雀”的外号。

In this way, the Chinese reader can derive the same pragmatic meaning from his or her own cognitive environment as the English reader.

Example 2:

“Don't be scared, chickens”, came her voice with teasing gaiety.

The pragmatic meaning of “chickens” here is that someone is a coward. This is not relevant to the Chinese reader's cognitive environment, because the word “chicken” has no contextual effect in their mind. To produce such effect, we must change the image. So the translation is:

“别害怕，你们这些胆小如鼠的东西！”只听得她用戏谑的口气说道。

In this way, the Chinese reader will draw the same pragmatic meaning as the English reader.

But, sometimes, because of the limitation of the cognitive environment of the TL reader, the method above doesn't work and the pragmatic meaning has to be made explicit.

Example 3:

A tenant offering five bales of cotton was told, after some owl-eyed figuring, that this cotton exactly balanced his debt.

“—that hearers will naturally start out with those contextual assumptions that are most easily accessible to them” (Guff, 1991: 2). So the English reader will easily associate “owl” with wisdom, while the Chinese reader will regard it as a bad omen. To avoid the misunderstanding, the image is forsaken and the pragmatic meaning is made explicit:

一个佃农上交了 5 包棉花，老板精明细致地盘算，告诉他说这些棉花刚好能抵上他所交的债务。

However, when it comes to designate the illocutionary functions of a given language/culture by labels drawn from another language, the situation is rather different: Often such labels can at best be highly approximate glosses for illocutionary functions which have indigenous designations but are difficult to translate and require explanation by paraphrase (Hickey, 2001: 12-13). Sometimes, because of the limitation of the cognitive environment of the TL reader, the pragmatic meaning has to be made explicit.

Example 4:

John can be relied on. He eats no fish and plays the game.

This sentence has been translated as: “约翰为人可靠。他不吃鱼，还玩游戏。” It seems right on the surface, but because of the lack of cultural background on the part of the reader, the illocutionary force is not communicated. Because communication can require the use of quite specific assumptions, and misunderstandings are likely to arise when wrong assumptions are used (Guff, 1991: 27). Here the required background knowledge is: there has been a fierce fight between the old and new religion in English history. It is regulated in the old religion on the fast day, only

fish can be eaten. After the old religion was overthrown by the new one, the followers of the new religion refused to eat fish on that day to their faith to the new religion. So “to eat no fish” stands for loyalty. Because of the lack of this assumption on the part of the reader, the image is forsaken and the pragmatic meaning is made explicit:

约翰为人可靠。他既忠诚又正直。

Another approach is what Hickey called recontextualisation: “By recontextualisation I refer to a radical approach to the translation of a particular text, which consists of totally or partially abandoning the literal, propositional or locutionary level, while maintaining the illocutionary act (usually ‘telling’) as far as possible and focusing strongly on the perlocutionary effect, directly or accurately reproducing it.” (Hickey, 2001: 222)

Example 5:

温州是我家，清洁靠大家

高高兴兴上班去，平平安安回家来

Such signs are often seen on streets and the foreign visitors are always curious to know their meaning. If they are translated literally as:

Wenzhou is my home. Its cleanness depends on all of us.

Go to work happily, come back home safely.

The foreigners will be confused. In fact, they can just be simply translated as:

Keep our city clean!

Good luck!

(叶苗, 1998:11)

In this way, they will find them cordial and clear. Although there’s a big change on the literal level, perlocutionary effect or the pragmatic meaning of the SL is maintained. So the second version is much better than the first.

According to the Relevance theory, the communicative validity is the priority. That’s to say the communicator’s intention must be realized. In order to achieve this goal, even part of the content can be changed, esp. in advertisements.

Example 6:

We know Egg-actly how to sell eggs.

不图虚名，“蛋”求无过。(赵彦春, 1999: 291)

The SL is an ad for selling eggs. “In advertising a great deal of attention is paid to the repetition of sounds and especially to play on meaning resulting from identical or similar sounds” (Nida, 1982: 15). And the force behind it is “AIM”—to call for the attention, arouse the interest and facilitate the memory of the audience. Although there are some changes in literal meaning in the translation, it nevertheless uses similar technique and results in similar force.

In one word, whatever approach he chooses, a translator has to ensure that the pragmatic meaning can be recognized by the audience.

To sum up, the two main claims made in this paper are: first, translation itself is primarily a pragmatic notion, used to indicate the kind of communication intended by the communicator

(Hickey, 2001: 52); second, the first priority in translation is the transfer of pragmatic meaning, which can be achieved by different means in pursuit of optimal relevance.

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正确理解是翻译的基础

贡群秋

【摘 要】本文对某些英语教科书辅导材料中的一些中文译文的严重错误从词义、语法关系、上下文的逻辑关系上进行了分析，指出产生这些错误的原因，同时指出正确地理解原文是正确进行翻译的基础。

【关键词】词义 语法关系 逻辑判断 翻译

在教授《21 世纪大学英语》第二册时我发现一些学生对课本练习中的一些句子理解不正确，经询问得知他们是看了由北京大学英语系王冬峡主编，科学技术文献出版社出版的《21 世纪大学英语读写教程课文辅导》（第二分册）（注：以下简称《辅导》）中的译文才导致理解错误的。我把这本书拿来看了一下，发现里面错误非常多。这反映编者极不负责任，同时也说明了正确理解英语原文的重要性。要翻译得正确，首先要做到正确地理解原文。只有正确地理解了原文，才能正确地把原文的内容用另一种文字表达出来。正确地理解原文是正确进行翻译的基础和前提。

正确地理解，不是一知半解，也不能只满足于字面上的理解，而必须从词义、语法关系、上下文的逻辑关系上去深刻理解。只有这样，才有可能处理好译文。为了说明问题，我们从词义、语法关系、上下文的逻辑关系上来分析一些错误的译文。除了《辅导》中的一些例子外，其他的例子选自中华工商联合出版社出版的《外刊经贸知识选读自考过关教练》（注：以下简称《教练》）。

一、透彻理解词义

一词多义现象在英语中是普遍存在的。一个多义词虽然在不同的上下文中可以表达不同的意思，但在某一具体的上下文中却只表达某一具体的意思，不能解释为其他词义。要正确地选择词义，就要从语法关系和上下文来仔细推敲。凡是对原文没有进行仔细地研究，甚至连一些词都还没有弄清楚之前就提笔翻译的人，无不出错。例如：

1. In a market-driven economy, a business can't depend on the government to help it out. 在一个市场作用的经济中，商业不能依靠政府的帮助来增加出口。（《辅导》p33）

在这个句子里，a business 是可数名词，意思是“公司、企业、商店”。动词短语 help sb. out 的意思是“帮助渡过难关”。此句可译为“在市场经济中，一个企业不能依靠政府帮其摆脱困境”。

2. An uneasy atmosphere was hanging over the classroom as the teacher returned our tests. 当教师再次返回我们的考场时，屋子里充满了不自然的气氛。（《辅导》p335）

在这个句子里，return 是及物动词，意为“归还、送回”。return 作“返回”讲时是不及物动词，后面要接介词“to”。test 的本意是“考试”，在此用了复数，可以理解为“试卷”。此句可译为“当老师发还我们的试卷时，教室里笼罩着一种不安的气氛”。

3. Their laughter and conversation sound as if they're enjoying each other's company. 他们的谈话和笑声好像他们都满意对方公司。(《辅导》p175)

在这个句子里, company 的意思是“being together with another or others”, 可以和动词 enjoy 连用。OALD 里有这样的例句“I enjoy his company, ie I like being with him. 我喜欢和他在一起”。此句可译为“他们的笑声和交谈听起来好像他们很喜欢待在一起”。

4. I wish I'd had the foresight to move to a different neighborhood before the new airport was built — now the noise and traffic are driving me crazy. 我真希望在这个新机场建设以前, 我要是能预见这个与众不同的邻居就好了——现在吵闹声和过往的车辆要把我吵疯了。(《辅导》p380)

在这个句子里, have the foresight 的意思是“有先见之明, 有远见”。different 的意思是“与此不同的, 另外的”。neighborhood 的意思是“one of the parts of a town where people live” (COBUILD)。OALD 里有这样的例句: “We live in a rather rich neighbourhood. 我们住在很富有的住宅区”。因此, 此句可译为“我真希望我有先见之明, 在这个新机场建设之前搬到另外的一个住宅区——现在, 噪声和过往的车辆要使我发疯了”。

5. I read the foreword to this book, but it didn't really prepare me for the wonderful creativity of these splendid exercises. 我阅读了这本书的序言, 但是它并不是我真正想要的这些令人满意的练习的精彩独创。(《辅导》p380)

在这个句子里, prepare sb. for sth. 的意思是“使某人对某事有所准备”, 代词“it”指的是“foreword(前言)”。原译文在逻辑上也是不通的。此句可译为“我读了这本书的序言, 但是它并没有真正使我为这些精彩练习令人惊奇的创造性做好心理准备”。言外之意是前言没有真正反映该书的特点。

6. On Japan's Position on Trade 关于日本的贸易地位(《教练》p152)

这是个标题, 其中 position 的意思是“view or opinion held by sb (立场、观点)”, 与介词“on”连用。position 作“地位”解时一般与介词“in”连用。这个标题可译为“论日本的贸易立场”。

7. The cotton index fluctuated narrowly on the Liverpool (England) market where interest was displayed in Chinese, Egyptian, Turkish and Peruvian styles. 在利物浦(英国)市场上, 棉花指数起伏不大, 在那里, 利润是以中国、埃及、土耳其和秘鲁等国的方式显示。(《教练》p367)

在这个句子里, interest 的意思是“兴趣”, 它可以与动词“display”和介词“in”搭配, 意思是“表现对……的兴趣”。interest 也有“利益、利息”的意思, 但是不与“display”搭配。style 用了复数, 意为“这几个国家的棉花品种”。因此, 这句话可以译为“在(英国)利物浦市场上, 棉花(价格)指数窄幅波动, 在那里, (人们的)兴趣表现在对中国、埃及、土耳其和秘鲁的(棉花)品种上”。

二、分析语法关系

语法分析可以帮助我们了解句子的结构, 明确词的所属类别, 弄清句中各成分之间的关系, 从而达到正确理解句子含义的目的。在很多情况下, 句子的意思理解得不正确是由于句子的语法关系不清楚而引起的。例如:

8. Ted finally showed up a little after eleven. He said he'd overslept. 托德 11 点以后才露面一小会, 他说他睡过头了。(《辅导》p89)

在这个句子里, a little 用来修饰 after eleven。a little 确有 for a short time 的意思, 例如 walk a little, 但是不能用来修饰表示短暂动作的动词 show up。因此, 这句话应译为“特德最终过了 11 点才露面, 他说他睡过头了”。

9. The government official comments on the present economic situation with moderate satisfaction, saying that it is showing signs for the better. 政府对现在的经济状况带有适度满意的官方评论, 说这是更好的征兆。(《辅导》p300)

在这个句子里, the government official 是主语, comments 是谓语动词, 与介词 on 连用。signs for the better 的意思是“好转的迹象”。该句可译为“这位政府官员适度满意地评论当前的经济形势, 说正在显示好转的迹象”。

10. Traditionally, a dark suit is preferable to a light one for evening wear. 传统的观点认为, 深色的衣服更适合浅色皮肤的人在晚上穿。(《辅导》p304)

在这个句子里, 代词“one”指代的是“suit”, 不是指“人”, 是“a dark suit”与“a light suit”相比。此句应译为“传统的观点认为, 深色的套装比浅色套装更适合在晚上穿”。

11. It's certain to end in war if either side violates the treaty again. 如果双方不再违反条约, 那么战争肯定就结束。(《辅导》p334)

在这个句子里, 介词“in”表示“以……方式”, “end in war”就是“以战争方式结束”。原文中 if 从句是个肯定句, 不能随便翻译成否定句。这个句子应该译为“如果双方任意一方再违反条约, 肯定就会以战争的方式来解决”。

12. Its (U.S.) policy is to open some Japanese markets (which it deems to be closed) by setting import targets — an approach to trade policy that supporters call “results oriented”. 其政策是用设定进口指标的方法打开日本的一些(它认为是禁闭的)市场——这一处理贸易的方法被拥护者称为“注重结果的”。(《教练》p152)

在这个句子里, that 从句是修饰“trade policy”的定语从句, 不是修饰“an approach”的定语从句。一些美国人认为日本的贸易政策是“注重结果的”, 在该教材的另一篇文章中有这样一句话: “Tokyo appears more ‘results-oriented’ than the Community.” 可以证明这一点。因此, 此句可以这样译: “其政策是用设定进口指标的方法打开日本的一些(它认为是关闭的)市场——这是对付被拥护者称为‘注重结果的’贸易政策的一种办法”。

13. An English school girl who was asked in the 1980s what she associated with Denmark, replied: “pig, pig, bacon, pig”. This may not be an uncommon image, but there is much more both to modern Denmark and to its food industry. 20 世纪 80 年代, 一位英国女学生被问及她常把什么和丹麦联系在一起时, 回答说: “猪, 猪, 咸猪肉, 猪。”猪, 这也许不是个不凡的象征, 但它对现代丹麦及其食品业都具有非常重要的意义。(《教练》p333)

在这两个句子里, associate sth. with sth. 的意思是“把……与……联想在一起”, image 在此应理解为“头脑里产生的形象”。much more 后面实际上省略了 than that image。再根据这篇文章后面讲到的丹麦食品业其他方面的情况, 这两句话可译为“二十世纪八十年代, 一位英国女学生被问及她常把什么和丹麦联想在一起时, 回答说: “猪, 猪, 咸猪肉, 猪。”这也许是个常见的形象, 但对现代丹麦及其食品业来说, 这个形象是很不完整的。”

三、进行逻辑判断

在翻译中，语法分析只是理解句子的一种辅助手段。因为语法上分析合理，并不一定逻辑上判断就合情。语句总是在连贯的上下文中表达一定的思想的。也就是说，处在具体的上下文中，句子的真实含义只能有一个，否则就会影响到语言交流思想的正常作用。只有语法上分析合理，逻辑上判断又合情，才算正确理解了句子的真正含义。

14. In the mid-1960s, many Frenchmen wondered if the Americans would ever make it to the moon if they insisted on calculating distances in feet and inches. 在 20 世纪 60 年代中期，许多法国人猜想如果美国人坚持以英尺和英寸来计算距离的话，他们将早就登上月球了。(《辅导》p49)

在这个句子里，wonder 的意思是“be in doubt about (怀疑)”。wonder 后面的 if 等同 whether，意为“是否”。原译文在逻辑上不合情理。英语原文的言外之意是不能只用英尺和英寸来计算距离，要使用更大的计算单位。这个句子可译为“在 20 世纪 60 年代中期，许多法国人怀疑如果美国人坚持以英尺和英寸来计算距离的话，他们是否能成功登上月球”。

15. If there is a road to China's future, Highway 204 out of Shanghai is it. ... Factories line the highway, producing sneakers, ... Eventually industry gives way to ricefields, which is being dug up to build still more factories. 如果有通往中国未来之路的话，那便是始自上海的 204 国道。……公路两侧，鞋厂……鳞次栉比。结果，大片稻田被工业区占用，用于建立更多的工厂。(《教练》p43)

这几句话说的是作者驾车从上海出发，沿着 204 国道行驶所看得到景象。其中 give way to 这个动词短语的意思是“让位于”，其主语 industry 指的是前面提到的那些工厂。“工厂让位于稻田”的意思是说作者一路上看到的都是工厂，后来终于看到了稻田。原译文“大片稻田被工业区占用”与原文在逻辑上不符。这最后一句话可以译为“终于，看到的不再是工厂，而是稻田了，可这些稻田正在被挖掘以建造更多的工厂”。

四、要有严肃负责的态度

草率、望文生义、自行编造是翻译的大敌。不能为读者提供忠实流畅的译文，就是对读者不负责任，甚至会误人子弟。下面就是个典型的例子。

16. Some people say that in the next 30 years the population of Antarctica and the Polar Regions will rise steadily, as will the population of the world's deserts. 有些人说，南极洲和北极地区的污染在未来的 30 年就像世界沙漠化数量一样将会稳步的扩大。(《辅导》p428)

这句话的正确译文应该是“有些人说，在未来 30 年南极洲和北极地区的人口就会像世界沙漠地区的人口一样稳步增长”。

翻译是一项严谨的工作，译者必须采取严肃认真的态度。对原文的每个词、每个句子都要反复推敲，仔细琢磨，还要运用语法分析和逻辑判断，才能把每个句子以至整篇、整本原作翻译得忠实准确。