

方兴／著

# 翻译问题新探

——基于戴维森意义理论的反思

中国社会科学出版社

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# 内容摘要

作为一座连接国家与国家、民族与民族、文化与文化的桥梁，翻译已经成为人类交流的最重要的实践活动，对人类文明的进步与社会的发展具有不可低估的作用。在全球化趋势日益增强的今天，翻译在增进国际交往和推动各国政治、经济、文化的发展中发挥着越来越重要的作用。正因为如此，翻译研究也越来越为人们所关注和重视。纵观翻译研究的历史，尽管随着时代的变化，研究者关注的焦点有所不同，新的理论不断涌现，但是我们仍然不难发现关于翻译的各种研究都与以下几个问题具有密切的联系：①翻译是如何成为可能的？②语际间的“意义”转换意味着什么？③翻译活动中最直接、最关键的因素——原语文本作者、译者、原语文本、译语文本、译语文本读者等因素之间有何关系？这三个问题不仅是翻译研究的核心问题，而且已经成为备受人们关注的难题。翻译本质上是一种跨语际、跨文化的交流活动，因而上述三个问题可以归结为语言交流的问题。就语言交流而言，首要的问题是对意义的把握和理解，因此，本书试图借助相关的意义理论对上述三个翻译问题进行深入、系统的探讨。

我们知道，在人文科学领域，随着解释学和语言学的转向，意义问题已经成为哲学、语言学、历史学和文学理论等诸

相关人文学科共同关注的问题。在对意义的追问中，产生了形形色色的意义理论。毫无疑问，这些意义理论从不同的视角和层面对于意义研究的丰富和发展都曾经作出过其应有的贡献，但是由于认识的局限性，它们都存在难以摆脱的困境。意义的指称论由于将语词的意义等同于事物，使意义实体化而招致批评和嘲笑；意义的观念论把意义仅仅归结为个人心中的观念，致使意义沦为一种不可表达、无法传递和不可理解的个人神秘体验，因而也为人们所诟病；意义的行为论将语言表达式的意义等同于引起该表达式的某种刺激而无法建立意义的公共性，因此同样遭受质疑和非难；意义的使用论因其过于宽泛含混而陷入困境；真值条件语义论则由于把语句成真条件的实现解释为语句的构成成分与指称对象的对应符合而难逃意义实体论的窠臼。正因为如此，美国著名哲学家戴维森另辟蹊径，构建了自己独具特色的意义理论。

与他之前的意义理论相比，戴维森意义理论的迷人之处就在于他不在内涵语境中寻求意义，而将意义的考察置于外延性的语境中。他巧妙地利用塔尔斯基关于真理概念的描述，通过引入时间和说话者对其加以改造和拓展，使塔尔斯基表明其构造方式的真理定义，即约定 T，从一种仅仅只相对于语句的真理定义模式转变为一种以约定 T 为基础，同时又相对于时间和言说者的真理论。“真”被看做关于语句、时间和人组成的有序三元组的特性，“真”不再是语句的特性，而成了话语的特性。这样，意义通过真理的言说，就真正实现了意义研究的语用学转向。为了凸显意义的使用，戴维森提出了解答意义问题的彻底解释的操作策略。这种处理意义的策略旨在表明，为了达到尽可能正确地解释他人的目的，解释者在对言语行为的观察中必须抑制自己的先见。彻底解释的成功是建基在戴维森提

出的整体论、宽容原则和语义外部论的本体论—认识论根据之上的。整体论使我们明确了一个人的大多数信念是一致的；宽容原则使我们承认信念在主体间的一致和真；在语义外部论的支撑下，我们可以确信解释者与被解释者之间能够面对一个客观世界，共享一个客观真理。这样，彻底解释的方法论使我们认识到自然语言的理解最终是基于非语言的事实。自然语言是认知可通达的。对语言的理解是在社会的公共脉络中进行的，是在言说者与解释者之间的相互作用及其与世界的联系中进行的。这一方面说明了对语言的理解需要主体间可交流，另一方面说明主体间的交流需要依据社会的规范或约定，以及参照同一个外部客观世界。正是基于此，戴维森进而为我们勾画了一幅人—他人—世界三者相互作用的三角测量的语言交流模式。

有鉴于此，本书在形形色色的意义理论中最终选择了戴维森的意义理论作为理论资源，借以重新审视以往关于上述翻译问题的研究，并且尝试给予新的说明。就翻译的可能性而言，对这个问题的研究主要是围绕可译性与不可译性的争论而展开的。持可译性论者认为，不同语言之间的交流和翻译之所以可能，是因为人类经验的相似性和人类文化的相通性使人类在思维方面产生了许多共性，这些共性决定了翻译的可能性；持不可译性论者则认为，由于不同的语言和文化渊源，不同的原语材料，不同的思维方式，都各自具有一定的特殊性，因而不同语言在翻译时自然会存在不可译性。根据不可译性论者的观点，翻译的可能性就取决于源语与目的语是否存在对等的语言形式和对应的文化元素。对翻译的可能性的这种认识，其困难在于它把不同语言之间的翻译简单化为一种静态的、机械的代码转换过程，而忽视了翻译的关键——意义转换是一个动态生成的过程。“语词世界”与特定生活世界、经验世界的密切关

系必须由翻译来支撑。“对等”的真正性质不是翻译预设的，而是由翻译产生的。作为翻译结果的“对等”最终要体现真正的理解，以实现真正的交流。借助戴维森意义理论的资源，在彻底解释的视角下考察翻译的可能性问题，我们认识到可译性是一个是否分享真理概念的问题。当语言交流者共享真理概念的时候，他们实际上已经理解了其所进行交谈的话语具有共同的导因，因为共享的客观真理概念帮助语言交流者将他们的话语联结到外部世界中的相同对象或者事件上，正是这些相同的对象或者事件成为他们进行语言交流的共同主题。“当同一事件、对象或者状况引起赞同或不赞同时，意义就被共享。”因此，戴维森认为，“……将你的语句翻译为我的语句的基础，依赖于共享的外部状况，它引起我们不同的刺激，也引起了我们的词语反应”。基于此，只要一个人能够同我们形成一个客观真理的概念，无论他是一个说不同语言的人，还是一个来自极不同的社会文化的人，他仍然能够正确地解释和翻译我们的语言。

至于翻译中的意义转换，研究者对这个问题的关注集中体现在如何看待翻译中的意义问题上。翻译就是翻译意义，对翻译现象的研究归根结底就是对意义问题的研究。翻译研究中的一切纷争实质上都源于对意义的不同认识。在西方文论和解释学的影响下，译界对意义的认识经历了以作者意图为理解文本意义根本依据的作者中心论、以作品的文本自身为理解作品意义根本依据的文本中心论和以读者的创造性理解为作品意义产生的主要根源的读者中心论三个阶段。作者中心论的基本观点是认为文本的意义就在于作者通过文本所欲表达的真实意图。然而，当我们追求作者的原意时，我们实际上就进入了对意旨的猜测状态，从实际操作来看，“作者意图”是永远不可及的，

因为作者意欲表达的意思和已经成文的文意之间不可能没有距离。文本中心论的基本主张是意义是语言的一种属性，文本的意义是由其语言组织、格式、技术手段而形成的。由于文本中心论将由语言世界所构成的意义看做文本自身的属性，因此它就将文本封闭起来，割断了其与作者和读者之间的关系。然而，文本只是一个信息的载体，没有作者的赋义和读者的释义，意义是不会自生的。读者中心论对意义的认识则在于它认为文本的意义，既不是作者意图的表现，也不是文本自生的，而是在读者参与阅读的过程中生成的。当读者中心论把文本的意义看做读者的建构之物时，它就赋予了读者对意义的绝对垄断权。由于形成意义的对话没有被赋予任何限制性条件，因此就必然导致理解的失范，使对意义理解的恰切性失去判据。文本的意义是一种作者、文本和读者三者共同参与、相互作用的结晶。上述中心论的意义观只偏重某一个因素，而将其他因素排除在外，由于失之偏颇而难免陷入相对主义的泥沼。

那么，当我们借助于戴维森的意义理论来重新审视翻译中的意义问题时，它会呈现关于意义的什么图景呢？戴维森认为，“意义首要和唯一的最高源泉就在于成功的人际交流”。如果我们要具有有意义的思想和言谈的话，那么我们不仅需要与他人进行语言沟通，而且我们语言的内容还必须被他人正确地解释。只有当人际间的解释完成了，他们的言谈和思想才有内容可言。意义绝不是人与人之间的语言交流产生之前就已经存在和可以“使用”的某种东西。由此可见，语言的意义不是一个个体的私人产品，它不是先被一个个体独自创造，然后成为其他人解释或发现的对象的。语言的意义是经由语言互动而产生的人际合作的产物。戴维森的意义观进一步暴露了中心论意义观的弊端。作者中心论的弊端在于，当它把作者的意图视



为文本的意义时，它就使意义私人化了，意义就仿佛是先被一个个作者独自创造，然后成为其他人解释或发现的对象。读者中心论的缺陷则在于它将意义的理解极端化为读者的独白，而忽视了与文本和作者在一定的语境和时间里应该进行的三维对话。

关于翻译活动所涉及的最重要、最基本的因素——作者、原语文本、译者、译本、译本读者等之间有何关系这个问题，人们对它的认识和理解与上述中心论的意义观具有密切的联系。在作者中心论的意义观的影响下，翻译被看做重建作者原意的过程，其宗旨是忠实于原作，译者是原作者的仆人，译文是原文的复制；在文本中心论的意义观的指导下，翻译成为一种机械的语言转换活动，通过对语言进行静态的解码，找出与原语中富有同等表达效果的对应项，与此同时，译者的主观能动性被忽略；伴随着意义读者中心论的兴起，作为原文的阐释者，译者成了对原文的重写者和操纵者，译者反仆为主，翻译成为译者操纵文本、争夺意义的一种手段，译文变为对原文的改写和挪用。然而，翻译毕竟不同于自由创作。因此，无论是对等的翻译结构建制，还是译者操纵的翻译结构建制都无法反映翻译活动的本真状态。较之上述两种翻译结构建制，建立在戴维森三角测量模式基础之上的翻译结构建制则更为合理地描述了翻译活动中诸因素之间的相互关系。戴维森认为：“交流始于导因聚合之处：如果对于话语为真的信念系统地被同样的事件和对象所引起，那么你的话语就意味我的话所意味的东西。”在他看来，我们思想的内容是由我们自己、我们与其在语言上互动的他人以及我们在世界中知觉的对象和事件这三者之间因果互动的系统模式决定的。因此，人一他人—世界三者之间的因果相互作用决定了思想的内容。语言交流的关键就在

于交流者是否对他们的言语所论及的对象在世界中的状况达成一致，因为把一种语言表明为言说的语言要求所表达的话语与世界中的对象和事件相匹配。语言交流就表现为一个语言使用者与其他的语言使用者及其共享世界中的对象或事件之间的三角测量。这种模式表明语言交流至少需要三个因素——一个交流者、另一个交流者以及一个共享世界的共同摄入，三者各占据三角形的一个顶端。据此，翻译，作为一种跨语言、跨文化的交流活动，就需要作者、原文、译者这三个因素的共同参与和相互作用。三者显然构成了戴维森语言交流三角测量模式的三个顶端，其中原文相当于世界中的对象，作者相当于一个语言的使用者，译者相当于其他语言使用者。真实的翻译依赖译者与作者通过文本进行的互动。这种三角测量模式的翻译结构建制避免了由于偏向某一因素而导致对其他因素的忽略和遗漏。它既体现了译者的主体性，又控制了话语的霸权行为。

由此可见，借用戴维森的意义理论作为理论资源，我们的确对本书所提取的三个翻译难题给予了新的、更为合理的说明和阐述。

**关键词：**戴维森的意义理论 真理 彻底解释 三角测量模式 可译性 不可译性 对等 操纵

# Abstract

As a bridge linking state to state, nation to nation, culture to culture, translation has become an important practice of human communication, whose significance for the progress of civilization and social development of human beings can not be underestimated. With the increasing expansion of globalization, translation is playing a more and more important role in facilitating international exchange and the development of politics, economy and culture of each state. As a result, more and more people have become interested in translation studies. Among them are linguists, literary men, semiotists, philosophers, historians, ethnologists in addition to translators.

Tracing translation studies, we can find that for all the variation of researchers' focuses with the rise of new theories, they more or less revolve around the following issues: (1) How is translation possible? (2) What is the transference of "meaning" between different languages? (3) What are the relationship among the basic factors in translation—the writer of the original text, the translator, the original text, the target text, the reader of the target text? The three are not on-

ly the key issues of translation studies but also the major concern of researchers. Translation in essence is a cross-culture and cross-language communication. It follows that the above three issues can be categorized into the issue of communication by language. As for communication by language, what matters is understanding and interpretation. Therefore, this book attempts to make a profound and systematic study of the three issues mentioned above on the basis of relevant theories of meaning.

As it is known, with the linguistic and hermeneutic turns in sciences of humanity, meaning has turned out to be a major concern in such fields as philosophy, linguistics, history and literary critics. The inquiry into meaning has brought about a variety of theories of meaning whose approaches to the subject from different aspects and at various levels have undoubtedly made their respective contributions to the studies of meaning. However, confined to their perceptive limits, these theories of meaning are entangled with their own difficulties. The referential theory of meaning equals the meaning of a word to objects, invoking criticisms and laughters by treating meaning as entities; The ideational theory of meaning is criticized for attributing meaning to the ideas of a person's mind, making meaning as one's own internal experience which makes it impossible to communicate, transmit or understand. The behavioral theory of meaning has been questioned for it treats the meaning of a verbal expression as the stimulus for the expression, making it impossible to establish the publicity of meaning. The use theory

of meaning is confronted with its problem of being too inclusive and vague. All this drives Donald Davidson, one of the well-known contemporary American philosophers in the world, to seek other ways to come up with his own theory of meaning.

In comparison with its predecessors, the charm of Davidson's theory of meaning lies in that he approaches the meaning in the extensional context instead of the intensional. He skillfully employs Tarski's notion of truth, modifies and expands it by introducing the two factors-time and speaker, transferring the notion of truth whose structure has been described by Tarski as Convention T from a model merely for defining truth of sentences to a theory of truth in relation to time and speaker on the basis of Convention T. Truth is no longer the feature of a sentence but that of an ordered three-factor set composed of the sentence, time and speaker, taking on the feature of an utterance. As a result, the expression of meaning in terms of truth has really made the pragmatic turns in the studies of meaning. In order to highlight the use of meaning, Davidson proposes the operational strategy of radical interpretation as a solution to the matter of meaning. The aim of such a strategy is to show that the interpreter should restrain his priorities in observing the verbal behaviors of the interpretee so as to interpret his utterance better. Radical interpretation is guaranteed by the ontological-epistemological justification of holism, the principle of charity and the semantic externalism. Holism makes it clear that most of our beliefs are coherent. The principle of charity claims the intersubjective coherence and truth of

our beliefs. And that the interpreter and interpretee can share an objective world and truth is underlain by semantic externalism. Accordingly, the methodology of radical interpretation shows that the understanding of natural languages rest ultimately on non-linguistic goings-on. Natural languages are intelligible in that they are understood in a social and public context where the speaker, the interpreter and their shared world interact with each other. This suggests on the one hand that the understanding of natural languages calls for intersubjective communication, On the other hand it reveals that intersubjective communication is based on social norms and conventions and a shared world. It is due to this that Davidson has drawn us a triangular model of linguistic communication in which a person, a second person and a shared world interacting with each other.

What mentioned above accounts well for our option of Davidson's theory of meaning among the various theories of meaning as our theoretical basis for the inquiry of the three key issues in translation studies. As for the issue of the possibility for translation, focuses have so far been on the dispute over translatability and untranslatability. Those in favor of translatability hold that communication and translation between different languages are made possible by the similarities of man's experiences and the communication of cultures. Those for untranslatability hold that different languages and cultures have their own special features, which leads to untranslatability of different languages. Untranslatability can be classified into linguistic untranslatability and cultural untrans-

latability. The former results from the lack of equivalences in the target language, while the latter lies in the fact that there are no corresponding counterparts because of cultural differences. According to the ideas of the advocates of intranslatability, the possibility for translation depends on whether there are equivalent linguistic forms and corresponding cultural factors between source language and the target language. The problem of such a conception of the possibility for translation is that it has simplified the translation between different languages as a static and mechanical code-switch process, overlooking that the essence of translation—the transference of meaning is a dynamic generative process. The link between the world of words and that of life must be grounded on translation. The truth about “equivalences” is the product of translation rather than its presupposition. As the products of translation, equivalences will in the end reflect true understanding to make communication possible. Using Davidson’s theory of meaning as our theoretical basis, we find that from the perspective of radical interpretation translatability is a matter of sharing the concept of truth. The concept of truth and the concept of translation is so closely related that if a sentence cannot be translated into a language we understand, this sentence is in principle not the extension of the truth we know. If a sentence is in the extensions of the truth predicate we know, it can be translated into a language we know. It can be inferred then that if two sentences have expressed the same concept of truth, that is,

they two are the extensions of the truth predicate we know, they can be mutually translated. When people communicating by language do share a concept of truth, they have in fact understood that their utterances share a common cause, for sharing a concept of objective truth help speakers tie their utterances to the common objects or events of the external world. It is these common objects or events that constitute the common topic for their communication. "Meaning is shared when a common event, object or state cause assent or dissent" For Davidson, "The translation of your sentence into mine is based on what is going on outside, which brings about different stimuli and causes different responses to words." Therefore as far as one can form a concept of objective truth as that of ours, he can interpret and translate our language correctly no matter whether he speaks a different language or comes from a culture quite unlike our own.

As for the transference of meaning in translation, researchers have focused on the conception of meaning. Translation is to translate meaning and studies on translation are in essence researches into the matter of meaning. Various divergences in translation studies are derived from divided notions of meaning. Influenced by the western literary theories and hermeneutics, researchers have undergone three major shifts of conceptions of meaning. One conception of meaning takes the intention of the author as the basis for the meaning of a text; another regards the text itself as the source for meaning; and the last one holds that meaning is derived from the reception of the readers.



When we seek for the intention of the author, we are as a matter of fact guessing what it is. However, the intention of the author in operation can never be reached, for there is always a gap between what the author wants to convey and the meaning of the text as his product. The basic ideas of the text-centered theory of meaning are that meaning is the qualities of a language, the meaning of a text consists in the organization of words, formats and techniques. The text-centered theory of meaning regards the meaning implied in the linguistic world as the quality of the text itself so that it closes up the text, cutting off its tie to the author or the reader. However, the text is merely a transmitter of information, so meaning cannot come into its own without the author's loading of ideas and the readers' interpretation. A reader-centered conception of meaning is that the meaning of the text is neither the expression of the author's intention nor the inborn constituents of the text itself, but the product of the reader's involving in reading. When the reader-centered notion of meaning takes the meaning of a text as the construct of the reader, it has hence endowed the reader with the absolute monopoly over meaning. Since there is no limit to the dialogue shaping meaning, there must be no standards governing understanding and the justification for the adequacy of meaning. The meaning of any text is the outcome of the interactions of the author, the text and the reader. The three notions of meaning mentioned above are trapped by relativism for they give priorities to only one factor without concern for the other two.