MASTER THESIS

A Report on the Translation of *XX*

Master of Translation and Interpreting

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ABSTRACT

As economic globalization continues to advance in depth, the translation of academic literature on economics has increasingly demonstrated its significance. This report selects and translates the 2015 Nobel Prize laureate’s academic literature into Chinese. Based on the research of the selected text and its Chinese translation by combining the case analysis with the comparative analysis, the report attempts to focus on what translation strategies are more effective in terms of realizing the ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions of the source text. The selected materials of this translation practice report do not have any existing translation versions for reference and the present author uses computer-aided technology to conduct a data analysis of the full original text before translation so as to learn about the features of the original.

This report is guided by the three meta-functions of Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics. Through the analysis, it is concluded that annotation of terminologies, division of long sentences, and conversion of passive voice can achieve the ideational functions of the translation; addition of personal pronouns, literal translation of modal verbs and substitution of mood adjuncts can realize the interpersonal function; omission of connectives and conjunctive adjuncts, reproduction of demonstrative pronouns and adverbs, and reorganization of sentence order and paragraphs can achieve the textual function. The practicability of these strategies has been confirmed by concrete examples in this report. For the translation of academic literature on economics, comprehension and expression are pivotal. The translator should be familiar with the characteristics and style of the text, proficient in translation skills with the help of computer-aided tools, and flexible in dealing with rendering difficulties. This report is also intended to give some implications to both the translation practice of and theoretical application to the similar texts in the future.

Key words: academic literature on economics; three meta-functions of language; translation strategies

摘要

随着经济全球化不断纵深推进，经济学类学术文献的翻译愈发显示出其重要性。本报告选择 2015 年诺贝尔经济学奖获得者的学术讲演稿进行汉译，基于对所选文本及其汉译文的研究，结合个案分析法与对比分析法，试图重点考察经济学类学术文献的翻译过程中采用何种策略可以在译文中更为有效地实现概念功能、人际功能、语篇功能等三大语言纯理功能。本翻译实践报告的所选材料无任何现有译文可供参考，笔者为了解原文特点，在译前借助计算机辅助技术对全文进行了数据分析。

本报告以韩礼德系统功能语言学理论的三大语言纯理功能为指导，通过分析，结论如下：对术语加注、拆分长句和转换被动语态能够实现译文的概念功能；增译人称代词、直译情态动词和替换语气附加语可以实现译文的人际功能；省却连词和连接附加语、再现指示代词和指示副词，以及重组句序和段落能够实现译文的语篇功能，这些策略的实用性已由本报告的翻译实例得到印证。对于经济学类学术文献的翻译，理解能力与表达方式至关重要，译者当熟悉文体特征，精于翻译技巧并辅以机辅工具，灵活应对翻译难点。本报告对今后类似文本的翻译实践及理论应用也具有一定的启示意义。

关键词：经济学类学术文献；三大语言纯理功能；翻译策略

Contents

Introduction

Economic development in the new era has played a more prominent role than ever in personal life, social change, country prospect as well as international stage. Whether the ultimate aim is to be in tandem with or outperform other economies, nearly every single country and region strives to engage in economic activities and discussions worldwide, therefore, economic texts, especially academic literature on economics have witnessed a boom of multilingual translation and cross-border dissemination, effectively and efficiently bridging language gaps and exchanging economic philosophies.

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Chapter 1 Task Description

1.1 Background and Significance of the Task

Economy is a general term for production, distribution, and consumption in the society, intertwining with nearly every aspect of people’s life. Economics research has long been one of essential issues that countries and regions shall and should put on the table while pursuing the national development and prosperity. In this regard, the annual Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences has drawn much attention from a lot of scholars and experts in various realms worldwide for its authority, credibility and perspectiveness. ...

1.2 Introduction of the Source Text and Its Author

The 2015 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences goes to Deaton for his unparalleled contributions to economics measuring, consumption behavior, social welfare and global poverty. Based upon mass diachronic household investigation and econometric models, the source text mainly discusses the “abnormal” phenomena of poverty in some regions, and gives explanations to the relation between inconsistent measuring methods and economic equality or inequality. Also, the source text deals with Deaton’s research conclusions on both theoretical and practical applications of economics. ...

1.3 Previous Studies on Economics Text Translation

After reading and classifying loads of available materials, the previous studies on economics text translation are conducted mainly in the following two perspectives: perspective of functional theory as well as perspective of linguistic strategies.

1.3.1 Perspective of Functional Theory

From a functional view, Chifane (2012) throws light on economic features and the “equivalence” effect in the course of English-Romanian translation and Romanian-English translation, focusing upon the problems emerging from the lack of lexical equivalence with examples. Consequently, the research points out that non-equivalence issues can be successfully addressed by means of employing appropriate translation strategies, such as paraphrase, explanation, cultural substitution word, omission and so on. Base on the Chinese-English translation of Chinese Economy at the Crossroads (excerpt), Pan Lingling (潘玲玲，2013) highlights the unique characteristics of economics text, specifically the expertise and normalization. She also agrees with Chifane over the forementioned translation methods to realize the final equivalence, and lays much more stress on the preciseness of terminology translation as well as translator’s preparation, attitudes and responsibility. ...

To sum up, with an outpouring of related researches in the recent decade, the present author thinks that although lots of the previous studies on the translation of economics texts are rather systematic and impressive, there is still much to be explored in this field. The coverage of translation language and guiding theory involved in economics text rendering relatively falls short of both expectation and demand. Great efforts should be cast in multilingual researches on economics translation practice from more diverse perspectives, which conceivably, will be likely to meet multifarious needs of the translation community and other potential users. In addition, employing corpus, eye-tracking and key logging data in the researches on economics text translation is indeed a remarkable and promising step, however, the focal point in some reports still merely lies in the version analysis of translation non-equivalents, misinterpretations or translationese.

Chapter 2 Process Description

2.1 Pre-translation Preparations

2.1.1 Translator’s Role and Qualification

Translation is an activity in which one language is skillfully transformed into another, and a translator is just like an assistant, an intermediary or a coordinator during the rendering process. With respect to this academic literature on economics, the present author-cum-translator shall take the responsibility to act as a bridge in order to correctly and appropriately convey both the message and the emotional propensity contained in the source text to the target audience. The most important role that the translator is ought to play is an eligible communicator equipped with translation strategies and bi-cultural awareness.

2.1.2 Related Materials, Translation and Corpus Retrieval Tools

The present author finds some authoritative bilingual dictionaries like The English-Chinese Dictionary (Second Edition) and The Chinese-English Dictionary (Second Edition) compiled by Lu Gusun, and collects several related economics books about specific terms contained in the literature as well as Deaton’s own books and passages in advance, among which the books are Economics and Consumer Behavior, Understanding consumption, The Great Escape: Health, Wealth, and the Origins of Inequality, and articles are “COVID-19 and Global Income Inequality,” “GDP, Wellbeing, and Health: Thoughts on the 2017 Round of the International Comparison Program,” “Trying to Understand the PPPs in ICP2011: Why are the Results so Different?” and “Creative Destruction and Subjective Wellbeing.”

...

2.1.3 Quality-control Methods

There are three quality-control methods the present author adopts in her translation process so that she can revise and edit her translation version. They are as follows: ...

2.2 During-translation

2.2.1 Understanding the Source Text

Understanding the source text mainly includes the understanding of the writer’s information, the target readers’ expectation, and of course, the comprehension of the source text; among them, the most essential part of understanding has to be the last one, which involves the analysis concerning semantic and syntactic features of this literature as well as Deaton’s writing style, et al. ...

2.3 Difficulties in Translation

2.3.1 Knowledge about Economics

Economics knowledge poses an enormous obstacle when the present author translates the text, an academic literature written by the Nobel Laureate who specializes in micro-economics for decades, while the translator has very limited knowledge in this field before she gets started. During the rendering process, the present author gradually discovers that without enough economic background knowledge, the translator may feel puzzled when she encounters some specific terminologies and unique expressions from time to time, and that the most head-scratching thing is that the word itself is common and quite familiar to the present author, for instance, the real meaning of “AIDS” in this source text, however, is completely different from what the translator presumes – a brand-new economics model. ...

Chapter 3 Guiding Theory

3.1 Overview of Functional Grammar

During the period of 1960s to 1970s, systemic functional linguistics began to sprout up and gradually blazed its new trail in language studies. Systemic functional linguistics proposed by Halliday is a kind of general linguistics as well as an appliable linguistics that he defines as a comprehensive, theoretically powerful language model, intending to address language-related problems in theory and practice. Another name "Neo-Firthian linguistics" reveals the fact that systemic functional linguistics is directly stemmed from the London school with representatives like J. R. Firth, and later on, is collectively enriched by thoughts of K. Buhler in the Prague school, sociologist B. Bernstein, anthropologist B. Malinowski as well as some other linguistic theorists, such as S. Lamb, C. J. Fillmore and K. C. Pike. ...

3.2 Three Meta-functions

Based upon massive records and analysis of early language development in children, it is believed by Halliday that language development in children is "the mastery of linguistic functions", and "learning a language is learning how to mean" (Hu Zhuanglin, 2006: 311). Therefore, he puts forward seven functions in children's model of language: the instrumental function, the regulatory function, the interactional function, the personal function, the heuristic function, the imaginative function and the informative function. Nevertheless, the adult's language becomes much more complex and it has to serve many more functions, and the original functional range of the child's language is gradually reduced to a set of highly coded and abstract functions, which are meta-functions: the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual functions (Hu Zhuanglin, 2006: 311-312). Halliday views the meta-functional principle as the principle that "has shaped the organization of meaning in language; and (with trivial exceptions) every act of meaning embodies all three meta-functional components.” (Halliday, 2007: 18) Namely, meta-functions is the common feature of language. ...

3.2.1 Ideational Function

...

3.2.2 Interpersonal Function

...

3.2.3 Textual Function

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Chapter 4 Case Analysis

After a brief introduction to the functional grammar proposed by Halliday, what is going to present is how to apply his three meta-functions theory, as a beacon, to guide the Chinese translation of "Measuring and Understanding Behavior, Welfare, and Poverty". As is mentioned above, the ideational function, the interpersonal function and the textual function respectively vary in the form and can be embodied by different expressions; based on that, the present author meticulously chooses the following representative translation strategies applied in her own rendering so as to illustrate how these tactics, serving as the catalyst of the final translation version, make clear original meanings, contexts and inner logic of the source text, showcase the laureate's explicit and implicit emotions, judgments or attitudes, as well as reveal the correlation and interrelationship within the whole article. To be specific, the case analysis consists of three sections. Firstly, ideational function and translation of academic literature on economics, including annotation of terminologies, division of long sentences and conversion of passive voice. Secondly, interpersonal function and translation of academic literature on economics, including addition of personal pronouns, literal translation of modal verbs and substitution of mood adjuncts. Thirdly, textual function and translation of academic literature on economics, including omission of connectives and conjunctive adjuncts, reproduction of demonstrative pronouns and adverbs as well as reorganization of sentence order and paragraphs.

4.1 Ideational Function and Translation of Academic Literature on Economics

As for the ideational function, translation of academic literature on economics mainly focuses on the experiential function. That is to say, the translation lays more emphasis on strategies applied in descriptions and depictions of economics-related concepts, jargons and knowledge, background information, historical development, and so forth. Besides, ideational function intends to accurately express the original meanings and deliberately shuns any ambiguity or obscurity, which can be seen from the translation strategies over long sentences and passive voice in particular.

4.1.1 Annotation of Terminologies

A crowd of terminologies are part of the reason why the chosen literature “Measuring and Understanding Behavior, Welfare, and Poverty” is indisputably academic and abstruse for target audience, rich in terminologies. Extra explanations or annotations in the context of translation studies can be of great help for further understanding.

Example (1) ST: preference (Appendix A: 52)

TT: （个人）偏好，微观经济学效用理论中的一个概念，即指消费者对某商品或商品组合的喜好程度或决策人对收益和风险的态度。消费者对商品的偏好可以基于客观指标，也可以基于因心理感受作出的主观判断。每位消费者都拥有特定的偏好，产生独有的价值判断，并在个人行为中据此对商品及其数量所带来满足程度的高低进行排序。(Appendix A: 52, 94)

Take existing academic books as reference, the present author translates “preference” into “（个人）偏好” which is one of the basic hypotheses in microeconomics, referring to the degree to which a customer prefers a product or a commodity combination. Annotation of this special term can be of great help in terms of explaining the customers’ subjectivity and value judgment towards products and elucidating that each customer has his own preference. Therefore, the annotation is introducing the economic background information to target readers in order to help them have a better ideational understanding.

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4.2 Interpersonal Function and Translation of Academic Literature on Economics

As for the interpersonal function, translation of academic literature on economics mainly concentrates on the description and expression of the writer’s identity, position, attitude or motivation, as well as on the delineation of his inference, judgment or evaluation about related issues. Similarly, there are lots of translation methods that can be applied to prop up the interpersonal function, including those dealing with personal pronoun, modal verb, mood adjunct, and so on. The ultimate goal of the interpersonal function is to establish a sort of specific relationship with target audience and then arouse their empathy.

4.2.1 Addition of Personal Pronouns

In the Chinese language, personal pronouns generally are less common than in the English language. Nevertheless, translating this academic literature requires the translator to act according to specific contexts, which means to add some personal pronouns in the rendering if necessary, so as to clarify the subjects and thus cater to the need of academic accuracy.

Example (13) ST: Aggregation needs to be seen, not as a nuisance, but as a hallmark of seriousness, as well as a source of hypotheses and understanding. (Appendix A: 51)

TT: 我们的确需要关注整体，不能将其当作一件麻烦事而等闲视之，相反要把整体作为科研严谨的标识，亦作为学说和理解的来源。(Appendix A: 51)

The present author adds the personal pronoun “我们”when she translates the expression“aggregation needs to be seen”. In the target language, the version“我们的确需要关注整体”is a much more common and familiar expression before stating a watershed perspective, aiming to convince target readers that like most people, the writer does indeed acknowledge and share the former idea, but he will point out another statement then to explain his thoughts. ...

4.3 Textual Function and Translation of Academic Literature on Economics

As for the textual function, translation of academic literature on economics lays more emphasis on the connection and coherence in the whole text as well as between sentences and paragraphs. As is mentioned in An Introduction to Functional Grammar, the systems of cohesion operate within either the grammatical zone or the lexical zone of the lexicogrammatical continuum (Halliday, 2004: 538), so there are two primary approaches to realize this function: lexical cohesion and grammatical cohesion. Specifically, translation strategies (omission, reproduction and reorganization) applied in the light of connectives and conjunctive adjunct, demonstrative pronouns and adverbs as well as sentence order and paragraphs are fairly conducive to translating the rigorous thinking and logic of this literature.

4.3.1 Omission of Connectives and Conjunctive Adjuncts

The conjunctive adjuncts cover roughly the same semantic space as the conjunctions; but whereas conjunctions set up a grammatical (systemic-structural) relationship with another clause, which may be either preceding or following, the relationship established by conjunctive adjuncts, while semantically cohesive, is not a structural one (Halliday, 2004: 83). Omission of these words in the Chinese version can undoubtedly achieve communication and also pander to the taste of the Chinese readers.

Example (25) ST: The work cited by the Prize Committee spans many years, covers areas of economics that are not always grouped together, and involves many different collaborators. (Appendix A: 50)

TT: 诺贝尔奖委员会所引用的这项研究，旷日持久，涵盖了经济学中常常分而治之的领域，期间幸得多方协助才得以完成。(Appendix A: 50) In the above example, the present author deliberately omits “and” in “and involves many different collaborators”. In Chinese, it is common and idiomatic that connectives are not required between short sentences, from which no ambiguity is supposed to arise. From the angle of textual function, the omission of “and” here makes the translation much more authentic in the target language and more fluent and coherent in the situation as well. Example (26) ST: Parenthetically, Stone seemed to be unaware of what is now (somewhat ironically) called the Stone-Geary utility function (Cobb Douglas with an affine shift of origin). (Appendix A: 72)

TT: 顺便提一句，有点讽刺的是，斯通当时似乎并未意识到这即是所谓的“斯通-格瑞效用函数（the Stone-Geary utility function）”（也就是原点具有仿射位移的柯布-道格拉斯函数）。(Appendix A: 72)

The conjunctive adjunct “now” is also omitted in this example when the present author translates “what is now ... called the Stone-Geary utility function” into Chinese “这即是所谓的‘斯通-格瑞效用函数’”. Through omission of the “redundant” adjunct, the translator renders the original meaning of the source text properly; it is superseded by the internal logic of Chinese language to coherently comb the history of this prestigious function of economics. ...

Summary

The report chooses "Measuring and Understanding Behavior, Welfare, and Poverty", an academic literature on economics written by the Nobel laureate Deaton in 2015, as the source text to be translated into Chinese. "Measuring and Understanding Behavior, Welfare, and Poverty" stands as a prestigious passage as well as a revealing speech concerning the issues of international poverty alleviation, consumer behavior and social welfare; it mainly explores and illustrates the outcomes of home surveys worldwide, trying to make thought-provoking explanations about the economic disparities among different countries and regions. Featured with a battery of terminologies and professional expressions, this text is also deluged with long academic sentences, passive voice, personal and demonstrative pronouns and so forth, which poses major obstacles during the translation process for a nonprofessional in the field of economics. Under the guidance of three meta-functions of systemic functional linguistics, the present author deliberately adopts and then meticulously analyzes the translation strategies to remove the lexical difficulties by way of annotation of terminologies, division of long sentences, and conversion of passive voice; to tackle the syntactic difficulties through addition of personal pronouns, literal translation of modal verbs and substitution of mood adjuncts; and to deal with the textual difficulties by means of omission of connectives and conjunctive adjuncts, reproduction of demonstrative pronouns and adverbs, and reorganization of sentence order and paragraphs, thus enabling the translated version to be faithful, logical as well as apprehensible for both professionals and nonprofessionals of economics.

The interim conclusions of this report can be summarized as follows:

Firstly, based upon the translation of academic literature on economics of this kind, the present author holds that the most elementary and essential quality for a translator is the comprehension ability and expression capability since these two competences can make a huge difference to the final version, either to the translation's meaning, or to its wording. For this reason, the present author pays much more attention to academic or professional information in the source text as well as the characteristics and style of

the source text, so as to keep away from misunderstandings or misinterpretations to the largest extent. Secondly, ...

Thirdly, ...

Limitations, however, arise in the report. Firstly, this report is not a complete summary and discussion about the translation strategies which can be skillfully adopted in the rendering process of academic literature on economics; secondly, nine kinds of translation strategies mentioned above haven’t yet been proved whether they are universally applicable, equally effective in other kinds of relative texts including scientific articles and expository writings.

As a result, it is suggested that a more systematic and comprehensive study of translation strategies for academic literature on economics need to be made. Moreover, ...

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Appendix A

这是附录 A 的内容。

Appendix B

这是附录 B 的内容。

Acknowledgements

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