

# Unit 14 Translation: From One Language to Another

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## Unit Overview

This unit offers a debunking of some popular ideas about translation and reveals the pitfalls or obstacles in translation. In this sense, it is a starting point of students' exploration into the translation world, as they will inevitably run into both these ideas and obstacles in their future study and work.

### Text A

In spite of its popularity, the adage that a translation is no substitute for the original is not true. It is accepted by many, probably due to other reasons than aesthetic ones. Those who stick to that opinion are confident that they have the ability to tell originals apart from translations, which is quite the opposite to what happened in history. Many translations claimed to be originals and many originals purported to be translations, and got away with it for many years. In terms of effect, translations may as well play the part of originals, as is borne out by the *Bible*, Tolstoy and many other translated works, which were well received and very influential.

### Text B

From the perspective of intercultural communication, there are five obstacles in translation, namely the lack of equivalence in vocabulary, idiom, grammar, experience and concepts of different languages. Back translation can help one locate mistakes in translation. As an age-old but relevant problem pertaining to translation, machine translation is gaining attention, with its application in U.S. military operations. Also emerging is a translation technique based on statistical analysis of actual language use, instead of linguistic rules.

Text A deals with literary translation and Text B is devoted to the obstacles in translation in general. Text A is more focused on argument and Text B is an exposition dealing with the technical issues, which also have to be considered and treated in literary translation.

## **Teaching objectives**

Communicative competence:

- Learn the expressions Bellos uses to describe famous translation deceptions
- Illustrate points with appropriate examples and anecdotes
- Learn to use concession, a commonly used literary device

Critical thinking:

- Distinguish between opinions and facts
- Explore implications and consequences of translation for the literary world
- Interpret and evaluate different perspectives of looking at translation

Intercultural competence:

- Compare Chinese and English in relation to the two cultures
- Understand obstacles in translation caused by cultural differences
- Understand similarities and differences across cultures

Autonomous learning:

- Be able to check achievement or progress in various ways
- Use reference books/materials
- Critically evaluate and validate information from the Internet

## **Teaching strategies**

This unit examines translation, which is complicated itself but has always been attracting remarks by people from different walks of life. However, most of them, even those who have studied foreign languages as their major will now and then air some unexamined comments. Of course, you cannot expect to "eradicate all the erroneous ideas in students' mind". Instead, it is advisable to help students to make sense of facts about translation and examine different opinions concerning translation, and validate them as Bellos does.

Due to the close connections between translation and such topics as humanities, social sciences, literary works, historical events and anecdotes, there are many interesting bits of knowledge, it is advisable to remind students that such facts themselves are not important. Students cannot expect to understand translation simply by memorizing such bits of knowledge. What really matters is that they should find

patterns of such facts and learn principles pertaining to translation. Otherwise, they will be lost in the ocean of information bits.

To have a clear idea of what translation is, Bellow's book *Is That a Fish in Your Ear? Translation and the Meaning of Everything* can be an interesting start, which is followed by *The Theory and Practice of Translation* by Eugene Nida and Charles R. Taber. For a grand picture of translation study, you can turn to *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies* edited by Carmen Millán and Francesca Bartrina, which runs 40 articles discussing about translation studies as an academic discipline, objects of translation studies, theoretical frameworks and research methodologies, specialized practices, and future challenges.

If you want to treat the mismatch of individual words across languages, as discussed in Text B, you can read *Semantics: Primes and Universals* written by Anna Wierzbicka. For similar content, you can read *Understanding Cultures through Their Key Words: English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese*, a much shorter book with a long title, by Wierzbicka.

#### References:

- Bellos, D. (2011). *Is that a fish in your ear? Translation and the meaning of everything*. New York: Faber & Faber Inc.
- Millán C. & Francesca Bartrina F. (Eds.). (2013). *The Routledge handbook of translation studies*. New York: Routledge.
- Nida, E. & Taber, C. (1982). *The theory and practice of translation*. Leiden: E. J, Brill.
- Wierzbicka, A. (1996). *Semantics: primes and universals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wierzbicka, A. (1997). *Understanding cultures through their key words: English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

#### Preparatory work:

**(1) The author of this article, David Bellos, is an established scholar in the American literary world. He is also a translator himself. Find out more about him:**

Skill: Critically evaluate and validate information from the Internet

#### Major research interests:

David Bellos is a professor of comparative literature, translator and researcher of intercultural communication. He also wrote a number of award-winning literary

biographies and an introduction to translation studies, *Is That a Fish in Your Ear? Translation and the Meaning of Everything*, which is the source of Text A.

### **Major translation works:**

His translation career is largely focused on works by George Perec, Ismail Kadare, and Fred Vargas. His translation of Ismail Kadare's works won him the Man Booker International Prize for translation in 2005.

Classroom tactics:

1. David Bellos' main research interests and translation achievements can be found using online academic engines. The teacher can show students how to validate the sources and choose the most relevant and reliable ones.

2. It is advisable to encourage students to take advantage of online bookstores to choose the books they really need. This is very important for two reasons. First, one must have a priority list because they cannot afford to waste time reading indiscriminately. Second, in libraries, one cannot locate the printed books and browse their content easily.

References:

<https://complit.princeton.edu/people/david-bellos>

**(2) This text is extracted from Bellos' book entitled *Is That a Fish in Your Ear? Translation and the Meaning of Everything*, which has created a stir in the literary world. Browse its preview version at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and name its main themes.**

The book *Is That a Fish in Your Ear? Translation and the Meaning of Everything* can be found at Amazon and other online bookstores, with a preview of contents and sample chapters. As mentioned in his prologue, Bellos does not want to write about how to translate or how he translates. In this book, he writes about a series of examples and arguments that circle around what seems to him to be "the real issue—understanding what translation does." He starts the book with the inquiry into the definition of translation. Then he asks what we can learn from translation and what else we need to learn about translation, as well as topics relating to literary translation.

Overall, Bellos is an insightful and reflective thinker, as borne out by the following quotations:

[T]he practice of translation rests on two presuppositions. The first is that we are all different — we speak different tongues and see the world in ways that are deeply influenced by the particular features of the tongue that we speak. The second is that we are all the same — that we can share the same broad and narrow

kinds of feelings, information, understandings, and so forth. Without both of these suppositions, translation could not exist.

The more profound his thought is reflected in the two one-sentence paragraphs that immediately follow the passage above:

Nor could anything we would like to call social life.

Translation is another name for the human condition.

References:

Bellos, D. (2011). *Is that a fish in your ear? Translation and the meaning of everything*. New York: Faber & Faber Inc.

**(3) The Prix Goncourt, a French literary prize mentioned in the text, is awarded to writers of French. Find more information about this prize.**

Prix Goncourt is a French literary prize, one of the most important in France. It was first conceived in 1867 by the brothers Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, and created in 1903 by a bequest of Edmond that established the Académie Goncourt, a literary society of 10 members (none of whom may also be a member of the Académie Française) whose chief duty is to select the winner. Along with a monetary award, the prize confers recognition on the author of an outstanding work of imaginative prose each year; novels are preferred. This task bears significance in referring students to literary prizes other than those of the English world, expanding their horizon and counterbalancing the influence of the Anglo-American content in their perception of foreign literary world.

References:

Prix Renaudot. (2015). In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved from <http://academic.eb.com/EBchecked/topic/477414/Prix-Renaudot>

**(4) In the text, it is mentioned that the Bible is actually a translated work. Browse the Internet and learn more about the amazing translation history of the Bible.**

Skill: Use reference books/materials

Classroom tactics:

You can refer the students attention to the history of *Bible* translation. For example, the forerunners of Protestant Reformation were at the same time translators. John Wycliffe (1330-1384) promoted the first complete translation of the *Bible* into English. Martin Luther(1483-1546) translated the *Bible* into German. Their efforts to translate were made to force the church to give up its worldly possessions and/or political powers. However,

reformers were not the only group of people who translated the *Bible*. The European colonists translated the *Bible* into the languages of the native people in colonies, in order to serve their colonial purposes. As a quote often misattributed to Tutu goes, "When the missionaries came to Africa they had the *Bible* and we had the land. They said 'Let us pray.' We closed our eyes. When we opened them, we had the *Bible* and they had the land." You can refer students to role of *Bible* translation in colonial exploitation, by consulting historical records.

In circumstances where people talk about the *Bible* in colonial era, they may split into believer camps and nonbeliever camps, with believers vying for the assumed "calling" of the missionaries while nonbelievers crying indignantly for native people's justice. Should such things happen, you have to tell them that they are having a scholarly discussion on historical facts only, not playing the game of moral arbiters.

#### References:

Biblical literature. (2015). In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved from <http://academic.eb.com/EBchecked/topic/64496/biblical-literature>

Biblical translation. (2015). In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved from <http://academic.eb.com/EBchecked/topic/64500/biblical-translation>

## Critical Reading

### I. Understanding the text

#### 1. Outlining

Thesis: The popular adage that translation is no substitute for the original is not true.

Part	Section	Para(s). and main idea
I	1.Introduction: popular but fallacious saying	1 A well-known fact
		2 Well-known facts are actually wrong.
		3 Popular sayings are not necessarily true.
		4 Fallacious sayings seem useful.
		5 Teacher's assertion concerning translation, although not necessarily truthful, is useful for other purposes.
	2 Why there is the saying assertion that translation is no substitute for the original	6 Reviewers parrot the assertion due to their lack of words.
		7 The assertion seems to empower the speaker.
		8 Ambiguity of substitute: take the place of; be as good as

		9 To make the assertion, one must be able to appreciate original as opposed to a translation.
II	3. Translation can indeed substitute the original, as borne out by so many examples. <b>Or,</b> It is very difficult to tell translation from original, as borne out by so many examples.	10 It is not easy to tell translation apart from original.
		11 <i>Fingal</i> , passing for translation, was actually original.
		12 <i>The Castle of Otranto</i> , passing for translation, was actually original.
		13 <i>The Letters of a Portuguese Nun</i> , passing for translation, was actually original.
		14 Andreï Makine's first novels, passing for translation, were actually original.
		15 Pseudo-translations are hard to kill off simply because of readers' self-confidence in telling translation from originals.
		16 There are almost as many translations pass for originals.
		17 It is difficult to tell translations from originals.
		18 The assertion is challenged.
		19 Translations can be as good as originals, as borne out by many famous examples.
	4 Translation can be as good as originals.	20 Translation can be as good as original, as borne out by Ismail Kadare.
	5 It is hard to live without translation.	21 Despite the stubborn assertion, it is impossible for one to do away with translation.

Classroom tactics:

1. Section One introduced the commonly-held belief that translation is no substitute for the original and its implied variant, i.e. the inferiority of translation. Section Two explores its origin. Section Three argues against the belief and then Section Four argues against its variant. Section Five gives the belief a final blow. It is advisable to refer students to this arrangement and tell them that one has to define the issue they would like to address clearly before they can argue unambiguously.

2. In addition, the author connects his argument against inferiority of translation in Section Three and Four with an artful analogy of coffee, creating a cohesive piece. This tactic is worthy of mentioning in classroom teaching, as it can help develop students' discourse awareness.

## **2. Comprehension check**

**(1) In Para. 1, Bellos mentions a “well-known fact.” Do you think that he really takes it as a fact? Why or why not? Please find evidence in the next two paragraphs to support your judgement.**

No, he does not really think it is a fact. We can find evidence in his arguments against it in the following paragraphs. In Para.1, Bellos makes a factual claim, which can be true and it can also be false. This exercise helps students to distinguish opinion and facts. (Para. 1)

**(2) Why does Bellos quote the three sayings in Para. 3?**

Bellos quotes the three sayings in order to illustrate the point that some sayings are useful but they are not necessarily true, which suggests the famous saying concerning translation can well be one of them.(Para. 3)

**(3) In Para. 5, Bellos analyzes an imagined situation where a teacher tells the students that translation cannot substitute the original. What is the Bellos’ purpose in doing so?**

He does the analysis in order to show that one may utter this saying for other factors than an aesthetic one. (Para. 5)

**(4) In Para. 6, why does Bellos use the word “parrot” for what the novice reviewers do when they are lost for a phrase?**

He would like to say that the book review writers just follow the catch word without thinking critically. (Para. 6)

**(5) In Para. 8, why does Bellos cite the example of instant coffee as a substitute for espresso? What point does he want to make?**

Bellos cites the example of instant coffee in order to show the ambiguity of the saying, i.e. on the one hand, translation can replace original; on the other hand, translation is not as good as the original. He will argue against the saying "a translation is no substitute for the original" in both directions in the following paragraphs. (Para. 8)

**(6) How would you describe Bellos’ attitude toward translation? Use evidence from the text to support your argument.**

Bellos' attitude toward translation is positive. Evidence can be found in Para.20 where he compares translation to elixir and in Para.21 where he mentions the irreplaceable masterpieces such as the *Bible*, Tolstoy and *Planet of the Apes*, which are all translations. (Para(s). 20, 21)



## II. Evaluation and exploration

### 1. Evaluating the text

***(1) In the text, the author lists some anecdotes of originals passing for translation and translation passing for originals. Fill in the table below with a summary of each of those anecdotes. The first one has been given to you as an example.***

Para.11	A literary piece in English by a minor poet was held to be the translation of Gaelic bard, entrancing many people for many years.
Para.12	<i>The Castle of Otranto</i> , claimed to be a translation, was actually original.
Para.13	<i>The Letters of a Portuguese Nun</i> , passing for translation, was actually original.
Para.14	Andreï Makine's first novels are recent pseudo-translations.
Para.15	<i>The Batum Worker</i> purportedly translated from English was actually written by a Russian poet, successfully deceiving Yevgeny Yevtushenko.
Para.16	There are almost as many translations pass for originals.

Skill: Learn the expressions Bellos uses to describe famous translation deceptions

Classroom tactics:

The students will benefit from instructions on how to summarize the stories of famous translation deceptions.

***(2) In your opinion, why could Ismail Kadare “see Lady Macbeth down the street, wringing her hands on the balcony, washing away the terrible things that had happened in her home.” (Para. 20)? What does Bellos want to tell us with this example? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?***

When Ismail Kadare “saw” all these things, he was actually imagining such terrible things happening to his troubled neighborhood. Bellos wants to illustrate the point that the translated *Macbeth* could create as vivid pictures, if not more vivid, as the original would have had created among audience.

Classroom tactics:

A brief introduction of *Macbeth* by Shakespeare to students will help them understand why Kadare could "see" such things.

A historical perspective may provide further help, as Kadare was born in a troubled era. At the age of ten, his country was still undergoing civil strife.

Even greater help comes from a close reading of the WWII-related book *Chronicle in Stone*.

***(3) What does Bellos mean when he writes that "And even if by some stroke of luck they did manage to keep clear of all but original work in their reading, they would end up with a decidedly peculiar view of the world—if they were English readers, they would have no knowledge of the Bible, Tolstoy, or Planet of the Apes." (Para. 21)? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?***

Bellos would like to say that they cannot do without translation, because translated works have permeated their life.

- Skill: Explore significance of translation in people's life

Classroom tactics:

This is an open question inviting students' critical response. It is advisable to steer students away from intuitive assumptions and encourage them find solid evidence, which may ultimately convince them of the statement. This is actually a process of two-fold growth: they get to know the ubiquity of translated works and experience the learning process via argument. This discussion is designed to help students explore significance of translation in people's life.

## **2. Exploring beyond the text**

***(1) Do you think something is lost in translation? Can you give some examples?***

"Poetry is what is lost in translation. It is also what is lost in interpretation." said Robert Frost, who believed that poetry cannot be paraphrased, still less translated. Frost believed that though you have produced texts that resemble poems, the poetry of the original has been lost, i.e. the "sentence sound" and the "sound of sense".

Additionally, Jon Green, a columnist for British Council, points out that British humor is lost in translation. Green finds that the humor that often doesn't work in the classroom is sarcasm.

Skill: Interpret and evaluate different perspectives of looking at translation

Classroom tactics:

Students may come up with many disparate and imaginative answers. It is advisable to help them to categorize and examine the answers critically. It is agreed that part of prosodic feature in the original is lost and sometimes the nuance closely related to the life experience unique to the people in the original is also lost.

References:

Green, J. (2013) When is British humor lost in translation? Retrieved on August 21, 2015, from <http://www.britishcouncil.org/blog/when-british-humour-lost-translation>.

Robinson, P. (2010). *Poetry and translation: The art of the impossible*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Untermeyer, L. (1964). *Robert Frost: a backward look*. Chicago University of Chicago Library.

***(2) If there are things that can be lost in translation, there may also be gains. Can you think of any examples where a translation improved on the original?***

Some scholars, such as Daniel Hahn and Fahmida Riaz, believe that translation sometimes adds accuracy to the original. As in the case of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, where García Márquez has been misquoted often as saying the translation of was better than the original. Similar remarks have been made concerning the works by Mo Yan, a Chinese Nobel Laureate.

Skills: Interpret and evaluate different perspectives of looking at translation

Illustrate points with appropriate examples and anecdotes

Classroom tactics:

Discussion on superiority or improvement has to be based on certain criteria. When the classroom activities are being conducted, it is suggested that the teacher remind the students of their agreed criteria from time to time, ask them to provide concrete examples, rather than general statements. It is generally agreed that new prosodic features and accompanying exotic tastes are created in translated works, although not in all pieces of translation.

If you have access to Bellos' *Is That a Fish in Your Ear*, you can find his opinion on translator's treatment of the original, and invite students to have a group discussion on it.

References:

Hahn, D. & Riaz, F. (2014). What makes a good literary translator? [Web log post]. Retrieved on August 20, 2015, from <http://www.britishcouncil.org/blog/what-makes-good-literary-translator>

***(3) Which do you prefer to read, a novel in English or its Chinese translation? Why?***

This is an open question, inviting students to offer their ideas on reading experience and reflect on their aesthetic judgment. If they can offer specific reasons for their preference, you can guide the class in critical examination of such supporting reasons.

Sometimes, in response to this question, students may say, “I simply like X, for no reason”. In such cases, you can guide their reasoning, by asking them to exemplify, compare and analyze the literary works they have read. Your patience will assure them and they will be willing to communicate their own ideas.

***(4) Bellos says that readers are not always able to distinguish whether a work is original or translated. Have you ever come across a work that you believed was an original but turned out to be a translation? Or the other way round? What features of the work led you to think that it was the original or a translation?***

The background song for *Red Alert 3*, a famous video game, may strike one as a Russian original for sure, because it involves such images as bear and sheep, and evokes the confidence in the military might of one's own country. In fact, it was written in English and then translated into Russian.

On the other hand, the Chinese song 贝加尔湖畔 (By the Lake Baikal) by 李健, due to the images such as Lake Baikal, bonfires, snow and ice, lake water, seems to be a Russian translation. However, it is actually a Chinese original.

Classroom tactics:

1. The misattributed translation or original found in songs can arouse students' interest and motivate them into more lively discussion. After students have summarized the defining features of translated works and original works, you can proceed to show them excerpts of 大唐狄公案 and ask them to decide its authorship. The students will be surprised to find their defining features have been challenged by this translated work, the original being *Judge Dee* by Robert Hans Van Gulik(高罗佩), a famous sinologist and diplomat.

2. If students are very passionate about doing projects, you can help students:

- develop their project topic, narrow it down to a practical one, which is the key to their success and future confidence in doing projects
- identify key questions or issues they wish to investigate

- locate ideas in the unit material which will underpin the project
- decide which method or methods would best enable them to collect and analyze data
- map out the practical details and timescale for the project, including the collection of data, which is the most often neglected part and the weakest part of students' projects.

References:

Gulik, R. V. (2014). 大唐狄公案[Judge Dee]. Hainan: Hainan Press.

Gulik, R.V. (1992). *Judge Dee at work*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

***(5) Do you think translation enriches a language and its literature? Can you name some examples?***

First, one can apparently find examples ranging from translation of Buddhism scriptures, the translation from English and Japanese after the Opium Wars, to the literary works translated from Russia during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Second, according to Polysystem theory of translation by Itamar Even-Zohar, who argues for the position of translated literature, translated literary works should not be viewed as arbitrary groups of individual works. Instead, they constitute a meaningful system and translated literature may possess a repertoire of its own, which to a certain extent could even be exclusive to it. In this sense, translated literature does enrich literature.

Skill: Explore implications and consequences of translation for the literary world

Classroom tactics:

It is desirable to ask students to go one step further, by comparing their impacts and discussing why some influence has been transient. This exercise encourages students to explore implications and consequences of translation for the literary world.

References:

Even-Zohar, I. (1990). The position of translated literature within the literary polysystem. *Poetics Today*, 11(1) , pp. 45-51.

***(6) Besides the possible reasons given in Para. 17, why do you think there are so many pseudo translations and pseudo originals?***

This is an open question challenging students' intellectual limits, as it is difficult to surpass the list of reasons given by Bellos, a writer, translator and scholar. However, it is

desirable to encourage students to come up with creative answers and argue for their claims, however naïve they may sound.

## **Language enhancement**

### **I. Words and phrases**

#### **1. Word formation**

- (1) Noun to Verb
- (2) Verb to Noun
- (3) Noun to Verb
- (4) Adjective to Noun
- (5) Interjection to Noun
- (6) Noun to Verb
- (7) Noun to Verb
- (8) Preposition to Verb
- (9) Adjective/Adverb to Verb

Classroom tactics:

In some expedient instruction setting, anecdotal examples such as *boycott*, *sandwich*, and *shanghai* can also inspire students and turn them into keen hunters of such phenomena.

#### **2. Homograph**

- (1) meaning “the statement is likely to be true.”
- (2) coming to the surface of something
- (3) healthy
- (4) an interjection used to show that the speaker is about to stop talking or doing something
- (5) used to adjust what you have said
- (6) a deep hole in the ground from which people take water
- (7) much, of a high degree
- (8) thoroughly

#### **3. Preposition**

- (1) for
- (2) for
- (3) into
- (4) from
- (5) against
- (6) to
- (7) off
- (8) of

- (9) of  
(10)with

## II. Sentence and discourse

### 1. Paraphrasing

- (1) You are trying to encourage the young people to accept the eighth commandment and using a conventional phrase to realize that moral aim.
- (2) The teacher intends to encourage them to work harder, not to teach the truth about translation.
- (3) However, just like all things people say and write, the saying that “a translation is no substitute for an original” means different things in different contexts.
- (4) It can satisfy people’s fantasies of national or linguistic authenticity, and it sometimes is done only to satisfy the public’s taste for things of foreign countries.
- (5) Young Ismail associated his life experience as a child in the war-torn city with the plot in *Macbeth*.

### 2. Translation

- (1) 这些格言虽不符合事实，却有用处。其典型用途是在特定环境下警告、安慰、鼓励他人，而不是证实某个司法理论、建立某个天气预报系统或者开辟什么刑侦科学。这就是为什么“译作不能替代原著”的说法只能误导那些视之为“众所周知”事实的人。
- (2) 但是如果没有这些暗示，读者真的能凭借语言和文学特色判断一部作品是原著还是译作吗？根本不能。无数作家把原作包装成译作，把译作包装成原作，而且一连数周、数月、数年甚至数个世纪都没被发现。
- (3) 事实上，这本书真的很畅销，而且催生了被称为“哥特恐怖小说”的文体。后来需要出第二版了，作者才不得不赔礼道歉：他拿不出意大利语原稿，因为根本不存在所谓的意大利语原稿。他所谓的“译作”其实是他用英语写成的。
- (4) 文学史历史上不乏更著名的伪作。《葡萄牙修女的情书》最初是1669年用法语出版，作者却声称是译作，尽管所谓的“原著”根本不存在。这部高雅且叩人心扉的作品在随后的三百年多年里深深地吸引着读者，还被翻译成许多种语言。
- (5) As gas acts as a substitute for oil, demand for oil will fall, putting downward pressure on oil prices.
- (6) He purports to be my friend but, in fact, behaves in an unfriendly way.
- (7) This musical achieved great acclaim on Broadway.
- (8) An angry crowd materialized from thin air

### 3. Rhetorical device

- Skill: Learn to use concession, a commonly used literary device

Classroom tactics:

When one uses concession, it shows that he or she has considered different views that can be made towards the issue in question before he or she makes the argument. Presenting the other side and then arguing it with valid points can make one's writing stronger. Your students are expected to learn concession, a commonly literary device.

### Intercultural reflection

***1. After its introduction to China, Buddhism, with its voluminous translations of scriptures, has been an influential factor contributing to the richness of the Chinese language. Explore the following words and expressions commonly found in your daily talk and discover their relation to Buddhism. You can refer to such sources as 《佛典与中古汉语词汇研究》 and 《佛学大辞典》, among others.***

妄想 爱河 世界 投机 现在 真空 真相 真谛 烦恼 悲观  
道具 机缘 空想 唯心 解脱 庄严 刹那 口头禅 臭皮囊  
狮子吼 一尘不染

Skill: Learn the impact of translation on Chinese language and culture

Classroom tactics:

After students have consulted dictionaries for the etymology of the words above, it is advisable to refer them to the 佛典与中古汉语词汇研究 to find how a systematic study should be done. This exercise encourages students not only to explore the impact of Buddhism translation on Chinese language and culture, but also to analyze their findings in a systematic way.

Other sources can be helpful, such as 梁启超全集 and 中国思想史. Liang Qichao argued that Buddhism translation influenced Chinese language and literature in more than one way. First, there were thousands of loan words. Second, it brought changes to the Chinese grammar and literary genres. Ge Zhaoguang gives a historical narration of Buddhism in China, dealing with its introduction, routes of dissemination, acceptance by ancient Chinese people as well as its influence on Chinese language and culture.

References:

Ge Z. (2013). *中国思想史*[An intellectual history of China]. Shanghai: Fudan University Press.

Ge Z. (2014). *An intellectual history of China*. Leiden: Brill Academic Pub.

Liang Q. (1999). *梁启超全集*[The complete works of Liang Qichao]. Beijing: Beijing Press.



**2. Make a list of all the verbs in English you can think of that have something to do with speech, e.g., “say,” “complain” and “protest.” Then name all the verbs concerning speech in Chinese you can think of. Compare the two groups of verbs, comment on the similarities and differences, and predict the implications for translation.**

The answer given by Ge Hongwen(葛弘文), a fictional(虚构的) student in late Qing Dynasty, when there was scant newspaper report in China, may go as follows:

If one looks at the formal part only, they seem to find more verbs relating to speech in English than in Chinese. The English list includes such speech-related verbs as *say, complain, protest, argue, note, observe, remark, groan, shriek, murmur*, whisper, roar, and many others. On the other hand, Chinese seems to have 说, 道, and a few variants such as 云 and 曰 only.

However, this does not mean that Chinese is not as expressive. If one take a more careful look, they will find the Chinese language has almost as many verbs relating to speech, if not in the same form. The Chinese has a very productive configuration, i.e. "manner+说/道". In other words, for all the galaxy of speech-related verb in English, one can find their Chinese correspondence in the "manner+说/道" formula. For example, if somebody complains, the Chinese will be “那人抱怨道……”; if one shrieks, the Chinese will be “那人厉声道……”; if one whispers, the Chinese will be “那人悄悄地说……”.

The differences above suggest that when one is translating English texts into Chinese, they should try their best to unravel the nuanced manner in which the speakers speak. Conversely, when they are translating Chinese texts into English, they have to find the verbs that suggest the nuanced manner in which people speak.

Mei Jiayi(梅嘉译), a fictional college student of the 21st century in China who has just finished reading the recent issue of 参考消息(Reference News), may challenge Ge Hongwen by saying something like:

No, no, no, it is not the case that Chinese does not have many verbs for speech. Instead, we have many, such as 致电, 建议, 表示, 强调, 呼吁, 谴责, 敦促, 提醒, 警告, 通报, 扬言, 坚称, 申述, 宣布, 指.

Ge, the Qing Dynasty student, may defend his position by saying that the examples given by Mei were problematic for two reasons.

First, they are not indigenous Chinese words, nor are they used by the sages, not found even in the novels. They were either borrowed from Japanese or translated from English. Second, they are generally used in indirect quotations only, whereas their English counterparts can be used both in indirect and direct speech. Therefore, examples given by Mei Jiayi are not relevant in the discussion here.

Skill: Compare Chinese and English in relation to the two cultures

Classroom tactics:

1. Left to themselves, students may not find many verbs related to speech. You can refer them to classic novels such as 红楼梦 (*Dream of the Red Chamber*) and its counterparts such as *Pride and Prejudice*, as well as some Internet corpora.
2. After searches, you can go one step further by guiding their analysis. You can ask them to categorize the verbs using clearly stated criteria, such as formality, or you can also relate this exercise to the Reporting Verbs you have explored in Unit 13. Via categorization, students are expected to catch the nuanced differences between the speech-related verbs, so as to use them more accurately in their writing and translation.

References:

Cao X. (2008). 红楼梦 [Dream of the red chamber]. Beijing: The People's Literature Publishing House.

Austen, J. (2010). *Pride and prejudice*. London: White's Books.

**3. Nida and Taber wrote that “anything that can be said in one language can be said in another, unless the form is an essential element of the message”. Do you agree with them? Why or why not?**

Nida and Taber's argument is based on their Bible translation expertise. They said that people who have no snow can understand a passage in the Bible that speaks about "white as snow." There are many ways for such people to understand it.

On the other hand, Nida and Taber conceded that no communication is absolute. We cannot find perfect equivalence when the translation involves puns, rhythm and alliteration. As a result, we have to sacrifice the formal elements for the sake of the content.

Classroom tactics:

If classroom discussion puts more weight on poetry or lyric translation, it is advisable to expand students' definition/perception of 诗 (poetry) so that it can include not only

rhymed verses, but also free verses and blank verses. Without such preliminary knowledge, they cannot have really critical discussion on "translatability".

References:

Nida, E. A. & Taber, C. R. (1982). *The theory and practice of translation*. Leiden: Brill.

**4. Translators must be both bilingual and bicultural. How do you understand this claim? Use examples to elaborate this viewpoint.**

Classroom tactics:

To prepare counterargument, some students may give the counterexample of 林纾 and Ezra Pound, but these two were not independent translators. To support this statement, one can find many examples, including successful ones and unsuccessful ones. You can encourage students to explore translated work of different genres, and several versions of the same classic work by people of different knowledge backgrounds.