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Reflection on SP Translation

FJU ENG Senior Play---Translation

I enjoy translating.

Actually, my dream job was interpreter. However, when I was junior, I took English-Chinese Translation, and I changed my mind since then.

I still remember the first assignment, “Lakers guards might be an odd couple, but coach thinks they can make it work”. Professor Gretchen Lee assigned the sport news and asked us to translate. It was the first assignment, and it is also my first translation work. It was a one-page article so it should not take a long time to translate. However, I spent plenty of time reading and reviewing the background knowledge and situation of the game in the article because of one term, “ice in his veins”. It was not a slang but a celebration words said by one of Lakers’ guards, D’ Angelo Russell.

In addition to the “ice in veins” problem, a trade term in NBA bothered me a lot as well. A simple word, match, contains a lot of rules in NBA. Thus, I spent time searching for the term and understanding the whole process and rules of players’ deal in NBA. After I knew the origin of the celebration words and the rule of the deal, I thought the article I translated is not only for professor but also for others to read. I put annotations of “ice in veins” and “match” at the end of the article because I thought they would help readers understand well.

When I finished the assignment, I realized that I had already spent hours translating. I was surprised that I could concentrate on the assignment for a long time, and I also noticed that I enjoyed searching and reading background knowledge and information to make my translation works complete.

I made up my mind to join the translation group of Senior Play because I might need some productions if I apply for translation job in the future. Senior Play is one of the major and traditional activities in our department. Therefore, I chose translation group, and I was recommended by my group members to be the group leader. There are three seniors and one sophomore in the group, and they are Alice Huang, Jennifer Wu, Vicky Chen, and me. When I saw the members, I thought we would encounter several problems during the process. They could be divided into two kinds: one is problems we may face, and the other is problems I have to deal with.

The first problem came to my mind is lack of experience. Seriously, four of us did not have any experience of translating scripts. Plus, we did not have the experience of following what actors said and display the captions synchronously when the play was on. To make this happen, we would need a lot of time to practice with actors so that we could get used to their speaking habits and pace. Plus, we should be more familiar with the script and our translation. Besides, we would have to be highly concentrated during the display.

Speaking of practicing with actors, being ignored and left behind was our second problem. Director, director assistants, and actors spent lots of time practicing to see if it was necessary to add or delete some lines. Sometimes, actors even switch the order of the lines on their own. However, if our group did not ask or check with them, we would totally have no idea what changes they made. Even when we stayed in the theater, we still needed to pay attention on their discussion. Otherwise, we would have a big chance of losing information. Since they spent plenty of time on the scenes and the coordination between actors, I think that we deserved much more time to practice following actors' lines synchronously and seeing if there was any proper adjustment to the sentences we could make.

Third, opinions about translation were different. Interestingly, this did not happen among the group members. This happened when the director assistants saw the captions. At the first time, our translation did not match actors' tone and situations, and some of the captions are wrong because of our misunderstanding. We noticed and corrected them immediately. We tried hard and insisted on simplifying the sentences so that audiences would not have a hard time reading the captions. Plus, we wanted to let audiences have more time to appreciate actors' performance rather than spending time comprehending the sentences. However, we were asked to add more words or phrases so that the sentences could be more "understandable". Our team members knew that one policy in translation is that "if you can express meanings in five words, don't use ten." Although the sentences did not look colloquial, they were not far from the real meanings and acceptable. Therefore, when we received suggestions, we would try and choose which one was better for audiences rather than accepting all the suggestions.

Forth, we have a sophomore in the team. Vicky is sophomore so she has not taken any translation course. In other words, she does not have any experience of translation. Besides, she is an introvert so in the first place, she is shy and does not talk too much in the group. She told me that she was anxious because she knew the seniors had the translation experience, and she was afraid that she would be a hindrance in the group. I told her that we were very happy she joined the team. Lack of experience did not matter because we wanted someone responsible and hard-working. Being willing to learn new thing is the most important.

As for my own problems, first, I am not a good leader. When I was recommended to be the leader, I was afraid that my teammates could not tolerate my inflexibility and stubbornness. Besides, I think I am poor at team work. Sometimes, I

feel it is better if I do the whole jobs. I would be unhappy if I see teammates do not take things seriously or reach to the demands. An alumnus who has experience of senior play translation told me that I can be principled, but do not be severe.

Second, I was worried that I could not organize well and divided work fairly. Translating a script was a huge project. Fortunately, the script, *The Secret in the Wings*, consists of five different stories. Therefore, it became easier to distribute the work. Besides, Alice, Jennifer, and Vicky were willing to help each other. As for organizing, when the team members were confirmed, I asked for a meeting and let members set up rules because I thought it would be convincing and acceptable for everyone to follow. Next, we agreed to have meeting once a week. Since it was a big project, and we all might need assistance if we could not come up with better words or could not understand the text. The result of meeting was extraordinarily helpful.

When I look back on those days, I appreciate that I had friendly, hard-working, and responsible teammates. It was memorable and joyful for me to work with them. In the first place, we were worried and helpless. After translating one of the songs, *Song of the Three Blind Queen*, things became better and different. It was our deal that we translated the lyrics together, and *Song of the Three Blind Queen* was the first one. To our surprise, we spent approximately one hour finishing translating, and we did not make any change afterward. We felt extremely surprised because we all came up with beautiful and proper words that were suitable for the song. Plus, we translated the lyric into classical Chinese. For example, we translated “Arrogant, in black armour, behind them stand,/ Disdaining the reins, with fluttering whips, the charioteers” into “眾騎兵 身著黑甲 立於馬後/揮舞馬鞭 傲睨著”. To us, they were simplified, clear, and powerful. We all agreed that this song was the best part we had done in Senior Play Translation.

When we finished our final draft, we did not feel relieved because it was few hours before the performance. Thus, all we felt was anxiety and nervousness. Actually, after the first performance, we still spent time modifying some of the sentences on the next day. I think this verifies that translating never ends because there will always be a better and different way to express. After the three-day performance, we were excited and happily celebrated. We hugged each other and appreciated everyone's work. However, at the same time, we started miss the solid days when we worked together and racked our brains to think about a proper word. "We did it. We did it for real." We yelled to each other. Four of us lacking for experience and being ignored could finish an important project. The stage manager knew that few people paid attention to us. However, she said, "I never worried about you because I know you guys would unite and get things done, and you did a very good job, I think." These words were definitely an encouragement to us.

Translation questionnaire was an innovation to Senior Play or Annual Play. I think it is useful for translation group to know what needs to be improved. Although the scripts and the team members are different every time, I think if each translation of plays can be preserved, it can be helpful and useful examples and guidance for students in translation group. Students can calculate the average score to see whether the translation is good or bad. Next, they can write down the play name, the advantages and defects of the translation, and feedback that audiences provide. After that, they can be preserved online or in folder to be examples and references. Also, it can be a way to preserve memory for each student to review their works not only in videos but also in words.

I would like to thank Professor Gretchen Lee for her guidance. She helped us comprehend the text correctly and provided advice. Professor also told us about

experience from previous translation groups so that we could be more confident and determined to know what our plan could be. I was thankful that Professor Gretchen could be our advisor and spend time reading and correcting our drafts. For me, I want to say, “Thank you, Professor Gretchen, you are the key for me to enter the gate of translation. You let me know how difficult translation could be, but at the same time, you also inspire me how interesting it could be. Thank you again, Professor Gretchen.”

