

## 英譯工作與漢語修養 從一篇譯文談起

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不久前在國內一雜誌上看到一篇題為《趙將括母》的短文及其英語譯文如下：

### 趙將括母

秦攻趙，孝成王使括代廉頗為將。將行，括母上書言於王，曰：「括不可使將。」王曰：「何也？」曰：「始妾事其父，父時為將。身所奉飯者以十數；所友者以百數。大王及宗室所賜幣者盡以與軍吏、士大夫。受命之日，不問家事。今括一旦為將，東向而朝，軍吏無敢仰視之者。王所賜金帛，歸盡藏之，乃日視便利田宅可買者。王以為若其父乎？父子不同，執心各異。願勿遣。」王曰：「母置之。吾計已決矣。」括母曰：「王終遣之，即有不稱，妾得無隨乎？」王曰：「不也。」括既行，代廉頗三十餘日，趙兵果敗，括死，軍覆。王以括母先言，故卒不加誅。

——據劉向《列女傳》

### Zhao Kuo's Mother

When the State of Qin started a war against the state of Zhao, King Xiaocheng of Zhao appointed Zhao Kuo leader of his army in place of General Lian Po, a veteran soldier known to the country. When Zhao Kuo was about to leave for the battle, his mother sent in a plea and went to see the King, saying: "Zhao Kuo won't qualify as a general."

"Why not?" asked the King.

"I used to serve his father in his days as a general. Well, he had provided support for several tens of his men, and made friends with hundreds. He had shared with his officers and officials all the money and silks that Your Majesty and other noblemen had rewarded him. Since the day of his appointment he had never been able to attend to his family. Now his son, Zhao Kuo, is made the

general, and he sits facing east while interviewing his officers, and he so lords it over them that none would dare to look up at him. He has stored in his house all the gold and silk Your Majesty has given him, and everyday he goes about making purchases of estates. Would you take him the same sort as his father? They're not alike, my Lord, not of the same turn of mind. I beg to have Zhao Kuo removed."

"Don't you worry about your son," said the King. "Now that I've made my decision, let it go."

"Then," said the mother, "if my son would turn out to be unqualified as a general appointed by Your Majesty, could I be excused from punishment?"

"Certainly," answered the King.

So Zhao Kuo started for the front instead of the experienced general Lian Po. It took just over thirty days for his troops to come to a defeat. Zhao Kuo was then killed and the army ruined. Zhao Kuo's mother, because of her forewarning to the King, was spared her life.

譯文總的來說流暢達意，惟以下幾處，似可商榷：

一、在 leader of his army 中，leader 宜改為 commander，因 commander 和 army 是常用搭配。

二、Zhao Kuo won't qualify as a general 中，won't 不如 doesn't 合適，因「括不可使將」指趙括的本性，動詞時態宜用現在不定式。

三、在 I used to serve his father in his days as a general 和 Now, his son, Zhao Kuo, is made the general 中，general 前的冠詞 a 和 the 最好刪去，因這兩處都表示銜頭。

四、「身所奉飯者以十數」譯為 he had provided support for several tens of his men 有兩處欠妥：(1) 古文「奉飯」中的「奉」等於「捧」，因此「奉飯」作「端飯」解，不能譯為 provided support for (其中 support 一字也是多餘的)。全句的意思不是「由他供養的人數以十計」，而是「由他親自端飯侍候的人數以十計」，其中「人」應指受他尊敬的人，如長輩和師長等。可採用意譯的辦法表達原意：He went out of his way to honour the elderly and the learned by the dozens 或 He acted courteously towards dozens of his elders and betters。又因所指的是當時的事，用過去式即可，不必用過去完成式；(2) several tens 不合英語習慣用法，應改為 dozens of。例如，可說 hundreds of (成百)、thousands of (成千)以及 tens of thousands of (成萬)，但未見用 tens of 指「數十」或「以十數」，須改用 dozens of。

五、在 He had shared with his officers and officials all the money and silks

that Your Majesty and other noblemen had rewarded him 一句中，all the money and silks 應改為 all the gifts，因古文「賜幣」的意思是「賞賜的禮物」，不作「賞賜的錢與綢服」解。原文句中的「宗室」指「國君或皇帝的宗族」，精確的譯文應為 members of the royal family，不宜譯為 noblemen（貴族）。又動詞 reward 後面不可同時跟間接賓語和直接賓語，應在 had rewarded him 後面加介詞 with。此外句中動詞 had shared 宜用過去式 shared。

六、譯文 he sits facing east while interviewing his officers 中的 interviewing 宜改為 receiving，因動詞 interview 通常作「訪問」或「面試」等解，不宜用來指上級對下級的接見。

七、「軍吏無敢仰視之者」指平時經常發生的情況，故譯文 none would dare to look up at him 中的 would 宜刪去或改為 will。

八、原文「日視便利田宅可買者」中的「日視」作「每天在物色」或「經常在尋覓」解；「便利」的本意是「方便」或「順利」，此處可作「合適」解。全句意即「每天在物色可買的田宅」。譯文 and everyday he goes about making purchases of estates 與原意出入較大。又譯文中 everyday 是形容詞，應改為 every day。全句可以改譯為 he's every day hunting for (或 in the market for) desirable land and houses。

九、在 Would you take him the same sort as his father? 一句中，應在 him 後面加介詞 for。To take someone for... (把某人認作……) 是習慣搭配。

十、「父子不同，執心各異」譯為 They're not alike, my Lord, not of the same turn of mind，後半部分欠妥，因 turn of mind 通常指人的「癖性」、「習慣」、「傾向」等。原文「執心」着重於人的「品質」，因此可以改譯為 They're not alike. They're different in character。

十一、在 if my son would turn out to be unqualified as a general 中的 would 應改為 should，因表示 suppositional mood 的 if 條件從句中須用 should。

現試將全文重譯如下，以供讀者參考：

### General Zhao Kuo's Mother

When the State of Qin launched an attack against the State of Zhao, King Xiaocheng of Zhao appointed Zhao Kuo commander of his army to replace the renowned general Lian Po. However, on the eve of Zhao Kuo's departure for the front, his mother handed in her petition to the King, saying, "Zhao Kuo hasn't got the makings of a general."

"Why not?" asked the King.

She answered, "I used to wait upon his father during the time when he was

general, and I found him going out of his way to honour the elderly and the learned by the dozens and having friends by the hundreds. He shared with his officers and officials whatever gifts Your Majesty and other members of the royal family had bestowed upon him. From the day he took command of the army, he forgot all about his family duties. Now his son is made general. When he sits facing east to receive his men in audience, none of them dare even to look up at him. He has stored in his house all the gold and silk Your Majesty has given him, and is every day in the market for desirable land and houses. Do you still think that he takes after his father? No, they're not alike. They're different in character. I beg Your Majesty not to send him on the mission as general."

"Don't you worry," said the King. "I've already made my decision."

"Then," said the mother, "should my son prove afterwards to be incompetent for being a general, could I, as his mother, be granted exemption from punishment?"

"Certainly," answered the King.

So Zhao Kuo was at the front as a replacement for Lian Po, but after a little over thirty days his army was routed. Zhao Kuo was killed and his army completely wiped out.

The King, however, pardoned Zhao Kuo's mother in consideration of her previous warning.

原譯欠妥之處，有的屬英語表達問題，有的屬漢語理解問題(如未能正確理解「奉飯」、「賜幣」、「宗室」、「日視」、「便利」、「執心各異」等)。可見要做好漢譯英工作，譯者不但要掌握英語，還要不斷提高漢語修養和對中國文化的了解，兩者不可偏廢。有的人認為漢譯英要理解的是母語，不會太困難。事實並非如此。筆者多年從事翻譯教學，發現學生在漢譯英作業中出現的錯誤，往往不完全是外語的表達能力差，而是由於漢語水平不高。筆者不久前應約為北京外文出版社審改《中國人名大辭典》的英譯稿，看到一些奇特的紕漏，大都起因於譯者對原文語言缺乏正確的理解。例如，把某作家的創作選集《風雨春秋》譯成 *Winds and Rains in Springs and Autumns* (可改為 *Stormy Years*)；把書名《歐行書簡》譯成 *Ouyang Xiu's Running Letters* (可改為 *Letters from Europe*)；把書名《邊政學發凡》譯成 *Origin of Study of Politics in Frontier Regions* (可改為 *An Introduction to the Study of Frontier Administration*)；把某作家的中篇小說《祖母綠》譯成 *Grandmother's Green Necklace*，令人捧腹(可改為 *Emerald*)。古典文學作品常用「蛾眉」形容女子細長秀美的眉毛。所謂蛾眉，實際上指形如蠶蛾觸鬚( feelers )的眉毛。譯者誤解本意，把

蛾眉譯成 mothlike eyebrows (像蠶蛾的眉)。似應改譯為 long, slender eyebrows arched like the antennae of a moth, 或乾脆意譯為 beautiful eyebrows、delicate eyebrows 等, 取其簡潔。上述有些譯例同時說明, 爲了正確理解原文, 翻譯工作者除精通現代漢語外, 有必要學些文言文, 因爲現代漢語中有大量詞語, 如四字成語等, 都來自古籍。

學好漢語和了解國情又是不可分隔的, 否則往往無法弄清楚原文的深層含義, 只能照字面依樣畫葫蘆, 從而出現死譯和誤解。不久前流傳把「西太后」譯為 Western Empress 的笑話, 就是一例。國情指原文所涉及的祖國歷史、地理、社會生活和風土人情等。筆者在審稿過程中發現譯者不理解「會黨」一詞指「一切以反清復明爲宗旨的民間秘密團體」, 因而把「中國會黨研究會」這樣一個學術團體譯為 Chinese Society for Study of History of Chinese Party and Society (可改為 Chinese Society for Research into China's Anti-Qing Mass Organizations)。又如, 上海過去有所謂「工部局」, 是 1840 年鴉片戰爭後, 英美日等國在上海租界設立的行政機關, 其英文名稱是過去盡人皆知的 Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC), 譯者缺乏有關歷史知識, 把工部局照字面譯為 Shanghai Works Bureau, 可謂風馬牛不相及。過去中國有許多教會大學, 都有其沿用不變的英文校名, 如東吳大學為 University of Soochow, 滬江大學為 University of Shanghai, 金陵大學為 University of Nanking, 震旦大學為 Aurora University, 輔仁大學為 Fugen Catholic University 等等, 譯者不了解過去中國高等教育界的情況, 都按漢語拼音譯為 Dongwu University、Hujiang University、Jinling University、Zhendan University、Furen University 等等, 這無異於標新立異, 只會引起名稱上的混亂, 有礙外國讀者理解。有人把 1949 年前的「新華社蘇中分社副社長」譯為 Deputy Director of USSR-China Branch of Xinhua News Agency。「蘇中」無疑指「江蘇中部」(Central Jiangsu), 怎麼會理解成 USSR-China (蘇聯—中國)呢?

應當看到, 學外語如果不先掌握好本國語言, 外語水平也不可能很快真正提高(從小就在外國生活者又當別論)。這是因爲人類在思維上有共性, 各種語言之間是相通的, 對一種語言的精通必然有助於對另一種語言的理解、學習和掌握。以英語教學為例, 我們發現學生基礎英語教學質量上不去, 往往與學生的漢語修養有關。對漢語一知半解, 往往會導致學生在英語學習中缺乏應有的理解力、邏輯思維能力以及寫作、翻譯能力。有經驗的外文工作者想必都有這種體會。