



## **English Translation of Official Chinese Documents: Criteria , Decorum , and Pedagogical Implications**

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The evaluation of Chinese>English translation is primarily based on two criteria: first, the accuracy of translation has to be judged with reference to the original Chinese text; second, English translation must comply with the established conventions of English writing. These two criteria are both indispensable and interdependent. While the absence of the first criterion would render anything but translation, deviating from the second criterion would negatively impact the effectiveness of translation, for a failure to observe linguistic decorum is likely to result in a failure to secure the English readers' understanding of and respect for the text, and consequently a failure to effectively convey to them the messages, ideas, and ramifications of the Chinese original, thus forfeiting the very purpose of translation.

The first criterion is not exclusively about the linguistic elements of the source text. (As the paper will illustrate in detail, many errors or inaccuracies, particularly in the areas of humanities and social sciences, derive from our tendency to search for linguistic elements in English that correspond to their counterparts in the original Chinese text). In fact, the first criterion refers generally to the comprehensive body of information (including denotations and connotations) that the translator has garnered from the Chinese text. However, because of the huge differences between the cultures intrinsic to the two languages, it is highly unlikely to make the translation in the areas of humanities and social sciences deliver a comprehensive body of information to the English reader that is identical to the comprehensive body of information that a Chinese reader receives from the source text. Consequently, the translators must first of all attain a good understanding of the information contained in the Chinese text (the first criterion) and then, by strictly complying with the decorum and conventions of English writing and also by taking into consideration various relevant linguistic and cultural factors of the English language, try their best to accurately communicate the comprehensive body of information of the source text to the English reader (the second criterion). From this perspective, the second criterion is quintessential to the evaluation of English translation, for the very nature of Chinese>English translation poses stringent demands on the translator's ability to employ the English language effectively.

Evidently, the quality of English translation has everything to do with the translator's English writing skills. Referring to the requirements for standard written English in high school and college curricula in the United States as caliber, this paper provides a detailed analysis of some examples of the English translation of official Chinese documents (focusing in particular on the syntactic structure and collocation), and offers some general but practical suggestions on pedagogical approaches to English translation and writing programs for English majors at college and graduate levels.