Unit 1

Literature Reading and Translation: General Description

Professional literature, generally speaking, refers to a set of works, or printed materials, or a body of writings on a particular subject, which may be classified as periodicals, monographs, textbooks, papers, encyclopedias, special documentation, mass media, audio-visual materials, etc. All professional literature is stylistically featured to be a kind of formal writing, with rigorous and unitary grammatical structure, and highly specialized and unambiguous wording for semantic accuracy. The ways to search for relevant literature include global search, specific search, processed search, etc. Translating professional literature needs special translation skills; and sufficient attention should also be paid to cross-cultural factors in translating.

Unit Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1 Define literature

2 Understand general linguistic features of professional literature

3 Search for relevant literature

4 Observe general requirements for translating various kinds of literature

5 Translate professionally and cross-culturally

Definition of Literature

What is literature? According to *Macmillan English-Chinese Dictionary*, it refers to "books or other printed information about a subject."

The word "literature" used in this textbook does not mean "文学," but "文献" or "文献资料," specifically referring to various (academic, professional, scientific) documents or texts in different fields.

When we talk about literature, one of the things we must look at is bibliography.

Bibliography (Greek *bibliographia*, the writing of books) originally meant the writing or copying of books; later the word has come to mean a list of books or other forms of written material, or the technique of compiling such a list. Certain kinds of information are supplied in a bibliography: author(s), title, edition, and date and place of publication; type of style, book size, and other physical characteristics may also be included. Frequently, bibliographies are annotated, that is, brief notes indicating the subject treated or commenting on the usefulness of a book are appended. Bibliographies, essential to scholars and those involved professionally with books, collectors, librarians, and dealers, can be useful sources of information for all serious readers.

Bibliographies may be divided into two broad types: analytic (sometimes called critical) and descriptive. The analytic bibliography is concerned with books as objects; it uses the evidence of physical features (for example, the kind of paper and printing idiosyncrasies) to establish authorship or judge the reliability of variant texts. The descriptive bibliography is the systematic enumeration of publications; it is, in turn, divided into universal, or general, bibliography and selective bibliography. General bibliographies may list works on several subjects, published in various countries and at different times. Selective bibliographies are limited, perhaps, to a particular subject, to the country of origin, to works of one author, or to books for a particular purpose or audience.

As an important means of knowledge reserve, literature has become a kind of precious resources or treasures for mankind and has greatly contributed to the social progress of the human race.

Classification of Literature

As is known to all, we are now in an information era characterized by rapid development of science and technology. According to statistics, within the last decade alone, the achievements in science and technology have amounted to the totality of inventions and discoveries of mankind since ancient times.

According to the differences of knowledge transfer, quality and quantity of information, and the levels of information processing of literature, literature can be classified into the following four main categories: zero literature (original sources without processing); primary literature (e.g. research papers, reports); secondary literature (e.g. various forms of abstracting); and tertiary literature (e.g. various kinds of reviews).

Facing such a vast ocean of professional literature, how should we conduct our literature search, reading and translation? Here, we just put different kinds of literature under the following headings:

► Periodicals

A periodical is a series of publications that appear at regular intervals. Periodicals are of various categories. From the perspective of names, for example, they are journals, magazines, bulletins, rapid communications, letters, proceedings, records, abstracting services, reviews, indexes, etc., which constitute the main body of literature.

Periodicals are characterized by being large in number and in variety, extensive in content and in circulation, diverse in language and in form, etc.

Along with the rapid development of science and technology, academic periodicals have been rapidly increasing and have been gradually professionalized, integrated and computerized.

The subject of periodical literature will be specifically dealt with in Unit 2.

► Monographs

A monograph is a book on one particular subject or branch of a subject that the author has studied deeply. The contents of a monograph usually include the history and the present status of a particular subject, observed data, experimental methods and results, existing problems and the developing trend, various viewpoints and discussions of different schools of thought, research achievements, further exploration, etc. A monograph usually functions as an important guide for the reader to understand the particular subject comprehensively and deeply.

The subject of academic books will be specifically dealt with in Unit 3.

Textbooks

In general, a textbook is a kind of professional writing specially designed for the students in a given branch of learning. Textbooks are compiled in a rigidly scientific, systematic and logical way. Comparatively, the content of a textbook is mature and well-established, because it has been compiled through the author's careful selection, verification, discrimination, integration and comprehensive study of the subject. If one intends to acquire a general knowledge of a certain subject, or if one wants to have a preliminary understanding of a certain issue, he / she should go over relevant textbooks, which proves to be the best policy.

Papers

Papers are the most important and reliable sources for textbooks, monographs, and all the other documentary works. A complete paper is usually composed of the following elements: title, author(s), affiliation, abstract, keywords, introduction, theoretical analysis and / or experimental description, result and discussion or conclusion, acknowledgments, references, etc. (Detailed description and exemplification of these elements in a professional paper are given in a separate textbook entitled *Paper Writing and International Publication,* by Hu Gengshen, et al., Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2014.) A paper usually deals with a relatively specific topic, with a comparatively narrow subject.

The subject of academic papers will be specifically dealt with in Unit 4.

Encyclopedias

An encyclopedia is a book or a set of books dealing with every branch of knowledge, or with one particular branch, in alphabetical order. The difference between a dictionary and an encyclopedia is that a dictionary explains words and an encyclopedia explains facts. As a basic reference book of generalized and summarized knowledge, an encyclopedia is usually compiled by many experts of many branches through many years. The contents of an encyclopedia, therefore, are comparatively mature and correct. It always serves as an important information retriever, providing comprehensive and systematic information about almost everything.

The information retriever as such also includes yearbooks, dictionaries, guides, handbooks, and the like.

The subject of encyclopedias will be specifically dealt with in Unit 5.

Special Documentation

Special documentation refers to all the printed materials that are non-books or non-

periodicals. Special documentation mainly includes standards, patent documents, trademarks, copyrights, contracts, agreements, reports, conference papers, dissertations (or theses), product specifications, government publications, proposals, technical archives, electronic hypertexts, etc. Though being neither like books nor periodicals, which are published regularly or publicly, special documentation proves to be an effective resource for information retrieval. Insofar as literature search and reading are concerned, this kind of documentation should not be overlooked. On the contrary, it calls for our attention – that is why we also place emphasis on documentation in this textbook.

▶ Mass Media and Audio-visual Materials

Mass media are diversified media technologies that are intended to reach a large audience by mass communication. The technologies through which this communication takes place vary. The broadcast media such as radio, recorded music, film and television transmit their information electronically or audio-visually. The print media use a physical object such as a newspaper, book, pamphlet or comic, to distribute their information. Meanwhile, the audio-visual arts are also different art forms that create works that are primarily visual in nature, such as print-making, design, crafts, photography, video, film-making and architecture. With the rapid development of science and technology, there are also a lot of other multimedia representations of learning materials, films, sound recordings, CD-ROMs, DVDs, Internet broadcast, mp4, A/V archives, audio books, and digital collections.

General Linguistic Features of Professional Literature

Stylistically, literature is a kind of formal writing. Compared with informal writing which usually utilizes an informal tone and colloquial language, where the author usually speaks in the first person, as in letters, diaries, stories and novels, etc., formal writing is a more serious approach to a subject of great importance and therefore avoids all colloquial expressions. Since the functions of professional literature are to reveal creative research achievements, facilitate professional information retrieval, and help improve the development of science and technology, it deals with the study of objective facts or problems, and analyses are based on relevant data, not on personal likes or dislikes, and discussions or conclusions are made following specific experiments or investigations.

Syntactically, professional literature has rigorous grammatical structure, and in most cases is rather unitary. Frequently used are indicative sentences, imperative sentences, complex sentences,

passive voice constructions, and the sentence pattern "It be + adj. / participle + that...," etc.

Morphologically, professional literature is characterized by high specialization, unambiguous implication and exact wording. There are more compound words, Latin and Greek words, contracted words, noun clusters and so on in professional literature than in informal writing.

Besides, captioned words are also very popular in various kinds of literature such as signs, formulas, charts, tables, photos, etc. for the sake of accuracy, brevity, and clarity.

Different kinds of literature may have different linguistic features although they do share similar characteristics. The feature of an individual piece of literature will be discussed together with the specific category of documentation in the corresponding unit of this textbook. Learning to understand the general features of various kinds of literature will be beneficial not only to documentation reading but also to the translation and writing of such documentary works.

Search for Relevant Literature

Search for relevant literature needed for professional study and research is a practical skill for professionals. This is important because an effective way of literature searching and reading will facilitate our information retrieval within a shorter period of time. In fact, everyone may have his / her own way of literature searching and reading. And the following are some common approaches:

Global Search

By "global search" we mean searching for materials around the subject in a larger dimension or within a wider range, i.e. conducting extensive reading. For example:

(1) Search for relevant books through the Online Computer Library Center, Inc. (OCLC).

(2) Search for relevant books through the *LC Catalog*.

(3) Search for relevant books through the *National Library of China Catalog*.

(4) Search for relevant books through the federated searching resources aggregation.

(5) Search for relevant books through Muse.

(6) Search for relevant books through Google.

(7) Search for relevant books through the classified and specified catalogs.

(8) Search for periodicals through *Quan Guo Bao Kan Suo Yin* (《全国报刊索引》).

(9) Search for current foreign literature through the *Sci-Tech Translations Bulletin*.

(10) Search for literature at home and abroad through Internet, WWW (World Wide Web), databanks, e-libraries, and other electronic retrieval sources, which will be specifically dealt with in respective units in this textbook.

▶ Specific Search

By "specific search" we mean searching for literature about the topic within a specific area or in a narrower scope. For example:

(1) Select some most-related papers for intensive reading.

(2) Expand the scope of reading on the basis of the references of the selected papers.

(3) Try to find out relevant reviews on the topic so as to know the authoritative comments, the experts' views, the global trend and the general development, etc.

▶ Processed Search

By "processed search" we mean accumulating and absorbing essential information in the course of literature searching and reading. For example:

(1) Store the searched literature by meticulous note-taking and self-abstracting.

(2) Sort out the searched documentation by putting it into different categories.

(3) Digest and absorb the searched information by creatively analyzing and synthesizing it.

Specifically, to digest and absorb useful information is the ultimate purpose of literature searching, reading and translating. This is a process of discarding the dross and selecting the essential, eliminating the false and retaining the true, proceeding from the easy to the difficult and from the outer to the inner. It is also a process of information reading, selecting, sorting, synthesizing, commenting, rationalizing, systematizing, reprocessing, etc.

One thing that needs to be mentioned is that, in an information era, the awareness of information discrimination is highly necessary since the collection and absorption of erroneous knowledge and information is harmful. Just as a saying goes: "The fool collects data and the wise man selects them," which, though drastic, is philosophical indeed.

Exercises and Practice

1 Answer the following questions.

1 What is literature?

2　How is literature classified?

3　Can you briefly state the general linguistic features of professional literature?

4　What are the key points for information retrieval?

2　Work in pairs and discuss the following questions.

1　If you were to give a brief talk about information retrieval on literature, what would you say? Offer your ideas and suggestions.

2　Tell how you have benefited from this unit for your own research project.

More About the Subject

▶ Information Retrieval (IR)

Information retrieval is the activity of obtaining relevant information resources from a collection of information resources. Searches can be based on metadata or on full-text (or other content-based) indexing.

Automated IR systems are used to reduce what has been called "information overload." Many universities and public libraries use IR systems to provide access to books, journals and other documents. Web search engines are the most visible IR application.

Every year, an enormous volume of new information is published from various fields, making it impossible for people to maintain complete collections of reference material. For this reason, individuals, businesses, educational institutions, and government agencies use IR systems to find information.

Retrieval systems provide ways both to store and to find such information. As each new source is added to the library, an indexer assigns it a set of descriptive words. These words, called descriptors, index terms, or keywords, indicate the main information in the source. A complete entry for each source lists the descriptive words, the storage location, and information identifying the source.

When a person wants a list of all documents that deal with a particular subject, he / she makes a list of words that describe the subject area. The computer searches its databases for all sources that include the information described in the person's list. Then it prints a list showing the title of each source.

One retrieval system that uses descriptors to gather information is ERIC. It is a US

nationwide information storage and retrieval system for published educational material.

▶ Kinds of Retrieval Systems

Retrieval systems include (1) reference retrieval systems; (2) document retrieval systems; (3) fact or database systems; (4) text processing systems.

Reference retrieval systems provide a reference – such as author(s), title, and location – to all documents in a file on a certain topic. The card catalog in a library is a type of simple reference retrieval system.

Document retrieval systems provide a complete copy of a document. These systems use micro-photographic methods, such as microfilm and microfiche, to produce miniature copies of documents.

Fact or database systems answer specific questions about matters such as inventory and payroll. A fact retrieval system could quickly provide the total earnings of a certain employee for any year.

Text processing systems are the most complex retrieval systems. A few have become successful. For example, computer software designers have developed programs that translate documents from one language to another with accuracy.

▶ Database

Database is a body of information made up of individual items that are organized so that they can be reviewed in a variety of ways. Many databases are stored on computers. Using a computerized database management system, a person enters information into the database according to various fields (categories). With a database program, a person can call up narrowly defined groups of data from storage. The computer displays the data on its screen. Some databases can perform mathematical and desktop publishing tasks.

Major users of databases include libraries in which online catalogs have replaced card catalogs. To determine whether a library has a copy of a certain book, an individual can select a field called title, then type all or part of the book's title. The person can also call up a list of all the library's books written by a certain author. The individual can select a field called author, then type the author's name. Other fields in this program might be subject, publisher, catalog number, and publication date.

Schools may use databases to maintain student records. Other bodies of information managed by database programs include expense records, mailing lists, certain medical records, recipe files, and tax records.

A computer user creates a database by entering information into one or more files. Each file consists of many records. Each record, in turn, contains pieces of information concerning one item.

In a library's online catalog, the items are the books. The individual pieces of information are organized into fields. In many database displays, a record runs horizontally across the screen, and fields appear as columns.

A flat-file database, such as an online catalog, enables a user to call up data from only one file at a time. A relational database can draw data from more than one file. A librarian might use a relational database to search for information on a particular area of study. The database might list agencies doing research in the field and periodicals that cover the subject area. Some relational databases can also identify which of the periodicals cited are owned by the library. The database program might also produce information on people working in the particular field of study or information on books written about the subject.

Thematic Translation Skills: Translation of Literature

▶ Preliminaries

Translation can be differently defined. Linguistically, translation is a rendering of a text from one language into another, i.e. the faithful representation in one language of what is written or said in another language. Culturally, translation is the representation of ideas, values and ways of life across different communities. Communicatively, translation is a means of communication, which plays an important role in human civilization.

In the West, literary translation can be traced back to about 300 BC; while in China, recorded translation activities were even earlier, dating from the Zhou Dynasty. However, not until the recent centuries, especially by the end of the 20th century did systematic study of translation get under way. The recent decades have seen rapid development in translation theory and translation activities both at home and abroad.

A modern society sees an extensive use of translation on various occasions. If a foreign language is generally accepted as a tool of human life, translation then obviously serves as a dynamic means of employing this tool. A proper and dexterous translation helps promote mutual understanding between peoples of different cultural and social backgrounds, whereas an improper rendering of words or expressions may lead to confusion.

Some people believe it is a science, others see it as an art, and yet many consider it a craft, or rather, a skill. Actually, the very word "translation" is ambiguous. And the Chinese equivalent *fanyi* sounds even fuzzier. *Fanyi,* in Chinese, may stand for a subject in the curriculum, a job

people engage in, a piece of literary work, the translating or interpreting work itself, or a person who engages in such an activity.

If the word "translation" refers to a subject, namely, the study of translation theory and skills, there is no doubt that it is a science, just as any subject is, with its own rules, laws and principles for the translators to observe; however, if it refers to some specific pieces of translation, then it is more like an art, with each piece manifesting its own charm and style in the creative hands of the translator; whereas, if it refers to a process, in which something is translated, then we may regard it as a craft or skill. For unlike any branch of natural science, the process of translation has its own nature, and none of its rules and principles is universally applicable. Therefore, it entails a lot of practice, and particular craftsmanship and skills are reflected by the touches of different translators.

Translation covers a very broad range. In terms of language, it can be divided into two categories: from native language into foreign language and vice versa; in terms of the mode, it can be divided into oral interpretation and written translation; in terms of materials to be translated, there are translation of scientific materials, translation of literary works such as novels, stories, prose, poetry, drama, etc., translation of political essays such as treatises on social problems, reports, speeches, etc., and translation of practical writing such as official documents, contracts and agreements, notices, receipts, etc.; in terms of disposal, it can be either full-text translation, abridged translation or adapted translation.

Despite a variety of opinions, two criteria should be generally accepted by all, namely, accuracy and lucidity. We may also take these two criteria as the principles of professional literature translation. By accuracy, we mean being faithful not only to the original contents, to the original meaning and views, but also to the original form and style. By lucidity, we mean not only easy and readable rendering, but also idiomatic expression in the target language, free from any stiff formula and mechanical copying from dictionaries.

Translation Techniques

Speaking of translation techniques, we differ from those who tend to ignore them, or dismiss them lightly as something inconsequential. On the other hand, we also differ from those who tend to exaggerate the importance of translation techniques, or look upon them as panaceas.

Different kinds of materials to be translated require different points of emphasis in their rendering. Professional materials stress their preciseness; novels and stories, their plots and characters; poetry, the emotion. And in document and professional literature translation, we should take into consideration various aspects: the contents, the form, the style, the wording, and so on, trying our best to be faithful to the original.

Generally speaking, the basic translation techniques that merit our attention and are to be applied in English-Chinese translation include: (a) diction – choosing the right words and phrases; (b) amplification – adding or supplying necessary words; (c) omission – a technique opposite to amplification; (d) repetition – using the same word or pattern more than one time; (e) conversion – changing parts of speech; (f) rearrangement – changing the word order; (g) negation – saying the opposite of an expression; (h) division – breaking up longer sentences, etc. Of course, different opinions are expressed about these labels of translation techniques. For example, some consider subordination a technique, referring to it as an inseparable link in the process of comprehension; and some do not consider repetition itself as a technique, putting it into the category of amplification; and quite a few people add the disposal of the passive voice, the rendering of technical terms, the rendering of long sentences, etc. to translation techniques, which, however, in the eyes of others, are not techniques at all but methods or approaches in tackling specific problems.

► Translation of Literature

As we mentioned earlier, different kinds of literature may have different linguistic features although documentary works of various kinds do have similar characteristics. Therefore, we should treat the translation of each of the individual documentary works discriminatingly. For example, when we translate monographs we should pay more attention to the strict wording and stylistic formality; while academic papers require specialized expressions and formal patterns. When translating special documents such as standards, their novelty and uniqueness should be kept so as to maintain their original styles.

Besides, general knowledge and knowledge of the subject matter are also of vital importance. For there is always the problem of the subject matter involved in translation. If we are called upon to translate documents on a specific question, even if we have a fairly good command of the languages involved we can hardly do the work well unless we have acquired sufficient knowledge of the subject matter, the relevant aspect of science and technology. As far as the required language proficiency is concerned, the greater the translator's knowledge of the subject matter, the more accurate his / her representation in the target language.

In order to expand his / her scope of knowledge, a conscientious translator should always do two things: (a) constantly exposing himself / herself to various materials on all subjects relevant to his / her work; (b) conscientiously consulting the relevant background materials or referential materials on the subject dealt with so as to keep up with the latest development of science and technology.

It goes without saying that cross-cultural awareness should be another important aspect in any kind of translation. We will, therefore, specially deal with the subject in a separate section.

Cross-cultural Translation (1): Introduction

Cross-cultural translation is one of the two sections of literature translation. The materials included in this section of this textbook are about perspectives of literature translation from different perspectives of cross-cultural communication.

As an introduction to this special section, we would like to make it clear first that this section will be logically and longitudinally interconnected, but the topic in a unit does not necessarily correspond to the latitudinal main text of that unit.

▶ Section Objectives

This section aims to broaden students' knowledge of different perspectives of cross-cultural translation, let students become aware of different cross-cultural factors and involvements in translation, and further enhance students' ability to translate various kinds of literature for international communication.

▶ Main Topics

The topics in this section include: considering religious factors, retrieving historical factors, identifying societal factors, locating geographical factors, understanding communicative factors, differentiating linguistic factors, etc. Various other factors also have to be considered in exploring the Internet, reading public signs, visiting cultural sights, etc. And to retrieve information from different mass media, we will have to be skillful in analyzing headlines, examining subtitles, navigating e-channels, etc.

▶ Points for Attention

Cross-cultural studies and translation studies are two separate branches of learning. Cross-cultural translation, which is of interdisciplinary nature, should be a gigantic topic for discussion and illustration. Many subjects will be involved in the studies, for example, linguistics, cultural studies, aesthetics, history, anthropology, fine art, psychology, communication studies, media studies, science of thinking, etc.

But within the limited space here in this textbook, the Main Topics mentioned above are the only focus.

Exercises and Practice

1 **Answer the following questions.**

1　What is your opinion on the importance of translation? Can you give some examples to support your idea?

2　What is translation? Do you agree with the author's point of view? Why or why not?

3　What general principles should a translator abide by in translation?

4　What do you know about translation techniques in general, and literature translation in particular?

5　What is your understanding of cross-cultural translation?

2 **Translate the following passage into Chinese.**

To digest and absorb useful information is the ultimate purpose of literature searching, reading and translating. This is a process of discarding the dross and selecting the essential, eliminating the false and retaining the true, proceeding from the easy to the difficult and from the outer to the inner. It is also a process of information reading, selecting, sorting, synthesizing, commenting, rationalizing, systematizing, reprocessing, etc.

One thing that needs to be mentioned is that, in an information era, the awareness of information discrimination is highly necessary since the collection and absorption of erroneous knowledge and information is harmful. Just as a saying goes: "The fool collects data and the wise man selects them," which, though drastic, is philosophical indeed.

3 **Translate the following passage into English.**

翻译有两种要素：准确性与表达性。准确性是翻译的首要条件。译者必须谨慎地遵循原作者的意思。字词的选择与句式结构必须如实传达原作的思想。表达性是使译文易于理解。换言之，译者必须用自己的文字尽可能将原作思想清楚而有力地表达出来。准确性使译文的意义确切无误，而表达性则使译文生动、引人入胜。

Unit Summary

　　文献是将知识和信息用文字、符号、图像、音频等记录在一定的物质载体的结合体。本书所涉及的文献是指某一学科或某一专业的或有历史价值的有关学科专业的图书、报刊、音像数据的总称。

　　本单元所涉及的文献包括：期刊、专著、教材、论文、百科全书、特种专业文献，以及多媒体电子和视听文本等。

　　这些文献属于正式文体，有其特殊的语言特点。它们的词汇专业化程度高，含义确切，词义固定。从句法上看，它们有严谨的语法结构；而在表达上，严肃的态度和严谨的措辞也要得到充分体现。

　　检索这类文献可以通过总体性检索、具体性检索、积累性检索等方法进行。随着网络的发展，各种信息检索变得越来越方便、快捷，能够通过不同渠道的文献准确地识别和阅读自己所需要的信息也变得越来越重要。

　　翻译作为跨文化交流的媒介，既是识别和阅读文献信息的一个有效途径，也是利用文献信息进行国际交流的一种重要手段。各种不同文献的翻译有其不同的要求，但其共同的要求是：准确与顺达。"准确"表现为原文的信息全部传达，语气和文体风格与原文相一致。"顺达"表现为译文的句式正确，选词妥帖。英译汉时要求段落之间、句子之间呼应自然；汉译英时要求句式处理恰当，选词妥帖，语言地道。

　　文献翻译中的跨文化问题及其处理策略和技巧不容忽视。本书对跨文化翻译中涉及的宗教、历史、社会、地理、交际、语言等相关因素，以及对互联网、公示语、文化景点的翻译问题等都有系列性的专题讨论和例述。

Simulation and Further Study

1 **Work out a literature review on the course of International Literature Reading and Translation.**

First of all, further understand the objectives, contents, and teaching arrangements of this textbook, and summarize the features of the course design.

Secondly, search for other courses of a similar nature, make a comparative study between the present course and other courses, paying attention to their similarities and differences.

Thirdly, on the basis of your work above, prepare a short literature review of about 500–800 words in English and translate it into Chinese.

2 **Determine and prepare your own research topic, which will be used for course simulation and course project in the following weeks.**