

Some Mistakes in Translation from Chinese to English in Business Correspondence

金 道 明

This article deals with some mistakes in translation from Chinese to English in business correspondence. The mistakes mentioned herein are not imaginary ones; they are often found in the students exercises. This piece of writing aims at giving some explanation of those mistakes so as to be of some help to the students as well as to those engaged in translation work.

1. Chinese: 货物的损坏是在运输途中发生的。

Incorrect translation: The damage to the goods was occurred during transit.

Correct translation: The damage to the goods occurred during transit.

Explanation: "Occur" is an intransitive verb. It cannot be used in the passive voice.

2. Chinese: 我们考虑降价 3%。

Incorrect translation: We consider to reduce our price by 3%.

Correct translation: We consider reducing our price by 3%.

Explanation: "Consider" should take a gerund as its object instead of an infinitive.

3. Chinese: 一俟供应情况好转, 我们用电报同你联系。

Incorrect translation: As soon as the supply position improves, we will contact with you by cable.

Correct translation: As soon as the supply position improves, we will contact you by cable.

Explanation: "Contact" is a transitive verb and should take a noun or pronoun as its direct object.

4. Chinese: 查你方8月5日信, 发现上次我们所装运货物中有一箱到达时遭到严重损坏。我们对此感到意外。

Incorrect translation: Referring to your letter of August 5th, it was sur-

prising to find that one of the cases in our last shipment was seriously damaged upon its arrival.

Correct translation: Referring to your letter of August 5th, we were surprised to find that

Explanation: Grammatically, it is usually considered wrong to make a sentence in which the sense subject of a participial phrase is not in agreement with the subject of the main clause.

5. Chinese: 我们等待着你的装运通知。

Incorrect translation: We await for your shipping advice.

Correct translation: We await your shipping advice.

Explanation: "Await" is a transitive verb and should take a noun as its object. The preposition "for" is used with "wait" e. g. "We wait for your shipping advice."

6. Chinese: 请注意，货物必须按发票金额的150%投保综合险。但我们知道按照你们通常惯例保险只按发票金额110%投保。因此，额外保险费由我们负担。

Incorrect translation: Please note that our goods must be insured against All Risks for 150% of the invoice value. But we know that according to your usual practice, you insure the goods only for 110% of the invoice value, therefore the extra premium shall be born by us.

Correct translation: Please note....., therefore the extra premium shall be borne by us.

Explanation: "Borne" and "born" are both past participles of "bear". The former means "carried", "supported" or "endured" etc. The latter means "brought into life" and is usually used in sentences like "He was born in 1980." or "He was born rich." etc.

7. Chinese: 我们确信，货物已抵达你港，情况良好。

Incorrect translation: We are sure that the goods have been arrived at your port in good condition.

Correct translation: We are sure that the goods have arrived at your port in good condition.

Explanation: "Arrive" is an intransitive verb. It can't be used in the passive voice.

8. Chinese: 合约第 867 号项下的货已备妥待运。请速开信用证，以便赶装10月15日开

往伦敦的“东风”轮。

Incorrect translation: The goods under contract No. 867 have been ready for shipment. Please open the L/C at once so as enable us to catch the S. S. “EAST WIND” which is due to sail to London on Oct. 15 th.

Correct translation: The goods..., Please open the L/C at once so as to enable us to catch the S. S. “EAST WIND” which is due to sail for London on Oct. 15 th.

Explanation: “Sail” is an intransitive verb and is used with “for”. e. g. “The ship sailed for New York.” or “The ship sailed from Shanghai to New York.”

9. Chinese: 我们对你的棉布很感兴趣。

Incorrect translation: We are very interested in your cotton piece goods.

Correct translation: We are much interested in your cotton piece goods.
or: We are very much interested in your cotton piece goods.

Explanation: “Very”, as an adverb, is used to qualify the present participle such as “very interesting” and “very astonishing”. It is the adverb “much” that qualifiet the past participle such as “much interested” and “much astonished”.

10. Chinese: 我们将另函寄给你新产品的目录一本。

Incorrect translation: We shall send you a catalogue of our new products under separate mail.

Correct translation: We shall send you a catalogue of our new productg under separate cover.

Explanation: According to the word collocation, “cover” is useod with “under” while “mail” is used with “by” e s “under cover” or “by mail”.

11. Chinese: 一俟收到你具体询盘，我们就把报价单和样品寄给你。

Incorrect translation: Quotations and samples will be sent to you upon we receive your specific enquiry.

Correct translation: Quotations and samples will be sent to you upon receipt of your specific enquiry.

Explanation: “Upon” is a preposition. It can't introduce a clause

12. Chinese: 由于抵你港的直接船极少，货物必须由香港转船。

Incorrect translation: Owing to direct steamers to your port are few and far between, the goods must be transhipped via Hongkong.

Correct translation: Owing to direct steamers to your port being few and far between, the goods...

or: As direct steamers to your port are few and far between, the goods...

Explanation: "Owing to" is a phrasal preposition. It can't introduce a clause; therefore in this sentence either the conjunction "as" is used instead of "owing to" or "being" is used to replace "are".

13. Chinese: 关于支付方式, 我们只能接受由第一流银行开出的保兑的、不可撤销的信用证。

Incorrect translation: Re terms of payment, we can only accept confirmed and irrevocable L/C issued by a first class bank.

Correct translation: With regard to the terms of payment, we can only accept confirmed and irrevocable L/C issued by a first class bank.

Explanation: "Re" is a Latin word meaning "about" which is often used (at the beginning of a) subject heading in a business letter like "Re Your Order. 568", but not to be used in sentences.

14. Chinese: 兹写信给你希望就发展双方贸易问题作进一步的讨论。

Incorrect translation: We write to you with the hope of further discussing with you the business developments between us.

Correct translation: We write to you in the hope of (in hopes of) further discussing with you the business developments between us.

Explanation: "With the hope of" had better be replaced by "in the hope of" or "in hopes of" because "in the hope of" or "in hopes of" is far more idiomatic than "with the hope of".

15. Chinese: 只有价格在具有竞争性的情况下, 我们将接受你们的报盘。

Incorrect translation: We will accept your offer on the condition that your price is competitive.

Correct translation: We will accept your offer on condition that your price is competitive.

Explanation: "The" is not necessary because "on condition that" is a set phrase meaning "provided that".

16. Chinese: 请告你是否对我们的男式皮鞋感兴趣。

Incorrect translation: Please inform us that whether you are interested in our men's leather shoes.

Correct translation: Please inform us whether you are interested in our men's leather shoes.

Explanation: "that" and "whether" are both conjunctions. Only one is needed in introducing a noun clause. The former is a meaningless word in introducing a noun clause but the latter introduces an indirect question meaning "if". Therefore "That" must be crossed out.

17. Chinese: 我们将高兴地与你公司建立业务关系。

Incorrect translation: We shall be glad to establish business relations with your Co.

Correct translation: We shall be glad to establish business relations with your company.

Explanation: Abbreviation like "Co.", which stands for company, is not advisable to be used in a sentence shown above.

18. Chinese: 你方定单收到, 谢谢。但非常抱歉由于目前承约繁重我们无法接受新定单。

Incorrect translation: While we appreciate your order, but we very much regret being unable to accept any fresh orders at present owing to heavy commitments.

Correct translation: While we appreciate your order, we very much regret....

Explanation: "While", as a conjunction, cannot be used together with "but" when it has the meaning of "although".

19. Chinese: 鉴于你我之间的长期贸易关系, 我们才给你如此优惠的报价。

Incorrect translation: In view of our long standing business relations that we offered you such a favourable price.

Correct translation: It was in view of our long standing business relations that we offered....

or: In view of our long standing business relations, we offered....

Explanation: "That", as a relative pronoun, should not be used in the above sentence unless in the construction of the emphatic "it".

20. Chinese: 很遗憾我们至今尚未收到你方信用证, 该证按合同规定应于上月底前到达我处。

Incorrect translation: We feel regrettable that up to the present we have not received your L/C which according to the stipulations of the contract should have reached us before the end of last month.

Correct translation: We feel regretful that...

or: It is regrettable that...

Explanation: "Regrettable" and "regretful" are both adjectives. But the former means "to be regretted" and the latter means "feeling regret".

(上接第59页)

(一)由各行各业派往国外的经营管理人员或其他专业人员直接带徒弟。

(二)派人参加各大学商学院办的短训班。如哥伦比亚大学经常主办为期四周的国际商业经营管理短训班。又如国际销售研究所(International Marketing Institute)每年夏季提供六周的有关跨国销售经营的短期培训计划。

(三)参加美国各地小型企业管理局(Small Business Administration)举办的各种讲习会和专题讨论会,以及管理局提供的如外国市场销售、函电、合同、托运、提供单据、信贷、金融、税收等等外贸课程。各地企业管理局尚备有外贸教学的成套教材和教具(包括影片、录象带、录音带)供各行各业使用。

(四)外语突击训练。如美国经营管理协会所属的外贸学会(American Institute on Foreign Trade)经常举办外语短训班。

为了适应我国对外经济贸易开创新局面的需要,大力培养对外经济贸易人才成了当

务之急。本文介绍的美国近年来在国际商业教学中有关目的要求、教学计划、课程设置、研究生培养以及短期培训的一些情况,我认为其中有些东西是可以借鉴,为我所用的。

例如应我国对外经济和贸易发展形势的需要,我们不仅需要培养能经营商品贸易的人才,还需要培养能从事国际合作,懂得如何利用外资、外技等各种国际经济条件的专门人才;不仅需要培养能经营农副土特轻纺手产品出口的专业人才,也需要掌握现代工业技术贸易、国际经营管理和通晓涉外经济法律的专门人才。随之而来的便是:专业要调整,教学计划要修订,课程要改革,教材要具有更高的理论水平和更大的针对性。

至于在发展全日制培养外贸本科生的同时能否发挥潜力大力发展非全日制和利用业余培养大学生、研究生的问题,以及在继续扩大招收四、五年制的外贸学生以外能否花更大力气组织短期的干部培训和培养收效快的二、三年就毕业的(大专)外贸专门人才等等重大问题,值得财经和外贸战线的教育工作者切实考虑。