

More Than Words: The Solitary World of Interpreters 口译员：沟通世界的桥梁

Go to any international conference, and you're **bound to** be **unaware** of their presence. Yet, without them, the high-level meetings and **shuttle diplomacy** that make our world go round would **grind to a halt**. They are interpreters, the **unsung** heroes who bridge the cultural and **linguistic** barriers between people.

参加任何一场国际性会议，你一定不会注意到他们的存在。但是，没有他们，这些让世界运转的高峰会议和穿梭外交将会嘎然而止。他们是口译员，是协助人们跨越文化和语言障碍的幕后英雄。

The challenge for interpreters lies in much more than just knowing two languages – say, Mandarin and English. Oftentimes, they need to do their job **in real time**, meaning that as a speaker is talking, interpreters have to listen to, understand, translate, and **verbalize** what's being said. The process is so **demanding** on the brain that live interpreters cannot go on for more than three hours without a break.

口译员所面临的挑战不单是熟悉两种语言—比如说，中文及英文—而已。多数时间，他们的工作都是现场的，意味着当讲者说话的当下，口译员必须倾听、了解、翻译并且陈述讲者的谈话内容。这样的过程极度消耗脑力，所以现场口译员连续工作三小时，一定得休息。

An additional **hurdle** for interpreters is that one **misinterpretation** may change the whole meaning of what the speaker is saying. **Consequently**, a congratulatory remark during peace talks at the United Nations can easily turn into a **catastrophic** mistake!

对口译员而言，另外一个负担是一个误译可能会完全改变讲者的原意。因此，在联合国发表的和平谈话祝贺词可能轻易变成一个造成大灾难的错误。

So why not use computer software instead? While many programs are **efficient** in mechanically translating words, they're not as good as the human brain in translating **subtleties** and indirect meanings. For example, one program was given the **biblical quotation**, "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," to translate from English into Russian. What came out was the **equivalent** of "the **vodka** is attractive, but the meat is **rotten**." A rotten translation indeed!

那么，为什么不用计算机软件进行翻译呢？尽管许多程序都能有效地、机械性地翻译文字，但是对于文字微妙处和间接意义的翻译，机器比不上人脑。比如说，某项翻译程序要将以下的圣经引言从英文翻译成俄文，输入「心有余而力不足」的英文，结果出来的俄文翻译是：「伏特加很吸引人，但是肉烂掉了。」真是烂透了的翻译。

—by J. Michael Cole

Vocabulary

be bound to 必定

hurdle [ˈhɜːdl] n. 障碍，困难

equivalent [ɪˈkwɪvələnt] n. 相等物

grind to a halt [hɔlt] 【喻】(指过程)逐渐停止

catastrophic [kætə`strɒfɪk] adj. 灾难的

More Information

unaware [ʌnə`wɛr] adj. 不知道的; 未察觉到的[F][(+of)][+that]

unsung [ʌn`sʌŋ] adj. 埋没的; 应该而未被赞颂的

linguistic [lɪŋ`gwɪstɪk] adj. 语言的; 语言学的

in real time 实时(/现场实际的)

verbalize [`vɜ:bə,ləɪz] v. 以言语表述

misinterpretation [,mɪsɪŋ,təprɪ`teʃən] n. 误释

biblical [`bɪblɪk!] adj. 《圣经》的

quotation [kwə`teʃən] n. 引用, 引证

vodka [`vɒdkə] n. 伏特加酒

rotten [`rɒtn] adj. 腐烂的

shuttle [`ʃʌtl] v. & n. 穿梭往返(两地)

diplomacy [dɪ`plɒməsɪ] n. 外交

efficient [ɪ`fɪʃənt] adj. 效率高的

subtlety [`sʌtl!tɪ] n. 细微的差别

consequently [`kɒnsə,kwɛntlɪ] adv. 结果, 因此

demanding [dɪ`mændɪŋ] adj. 费力的; 高要求的