



Understanding culture and context as well as analytical thinking are key to the success of The Translation Business, reports the Chamber's staff writer **Yannas Chung**

了解文化背景和分析思考，是經典翻譯的成功之道

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# The Changing Role of Translators

## 譯者角色的轉變

“**T**ranslators are cultural ambassadors,” said Poking Chan, Director of The Translation Business. “It is their mission to help achieve the purpose of successful communication.”

In fact, cultural exchange has always been a part of translation, going right back to ancient times. It remains as important as ever today in the context of business translation.

Translators are commissioned by clients not just to translate the language, but also to help them communicate with their target audience by fine-tuning and adjusting their tone and style.

“Commercial translation is like making clothes – we tailor-make the translation to every client depending on their needs,” Chan added.

Established in 1994, The Translation Business is now celebrating its 25th anniversary. It is a boutique language service provider, with cli-

ents including global banks, asset managers, and financial institutions with specializations in areas such as investment, wealth management, law and public relations.

Chan majored in Chinese Studies in university, and later earned a Master's in Women's Studies in Britain. After graduation, she took up a language-related job at The Family Planning Association of Hong Kong, preparing sex education resources by translating and editing materials for teachers, social workers and students. But she changed focus in 1991, when she moved to Australia and did an MBA.

A few years later, after returning to Hong Kong, Chan did some translation work for a human resource training company from the United States. Her success at this project led to referrals to other companies, including large multinationals.

“This growing client base proved

to me that I was capable of setting up my own business,” Chan said, and The Translation Business was born.

It turned out to be a good time to set up a translation operation. In the late 1990s, there was an influx of British, American and European fund management companies to Hong Kong. The Translation Business was able to build up a broad and deep expertise with the banking and asset management industries, along with general commercial translation.

Chan remarked that the past two decades have seen many changes in the financial sector, including a growing interest in “impact investment” which generates social or environmental benefits. She explained that these range from technical funds in water resources or sustainable energy to broad-based funds focusing on ESG – environmental, social and governance.

“I am so grateful to see that inves-

tors now no longer only talk about profit maximization,” she added. And as a Women’s Studies graduate, Chan said that she is also heartened to see a growing emphasis on equality in the workplace in recent years.

### Quality is key

To succeed in the translation business, quality must come first, Chan said.

“What makes us exceptional in this competitive marketplace is our consistently high-quality performance – that’s why our clients keep coming back.”

Another core value of the company – and its biggest asset – is talent. Even as artificial intelligence (AI) makes great strides, including its translation capabilities, Chan is not concerned.

“AI will not replace human translators,” she said. “Translators are informed communicators with analytical thinking and sound judgement.”

Nuance is essential, and professional translators do not just understand the meaning of the words, but also the context and purpose of every document they review.

“The translation approach for marketing materials is definitely different from the approach for legal documents,” Chan explained.

“As language is always evolving, at the end of the day, it is still human translators who judge and decide the most appropriate diction. They have the knowledge and judgment in that particular field to transform the meaning of the source text to the target text in the most natural and colloquial way.”

Since The Translation Business focuses on the financial sector, the role of human translators is particularly vital as they need to have specialized knowledge in their field as well as a broader understanding of the context.

“Fund management is closely related to macroeconomics, and

nowadays geopolitics cannot be ignored,” she said.

For example, translators working on texts concerning Brexit would need to understand the various viewpoints and complex reasons behind Britain’s exit from the European Union. They may even need to come up with a new solution if there is not already an established translation of a word or phrase.

“Therefore, you cannot just know about the rise and fall of markets. Translators’ vision and knowledge plays a crucial role – and that’s why we always train and encourage our translators to learn from every commissioned task to perfect themselves.”



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### Working with technology

Though Chan does not see AI posing any danger to the need for human translators, she does agree that this technology is advancing by leaps and bound.

“We have seen how fast computer-aided translation and machine translation have developed, and how much attention people in the industry are paying to these developments,” she said.

In an ideal situation, translators can use this technology to help

them produce initial translations, then they can do “post-editing” which includes the revision and refinement of content, to check for accuracy, meaning and nuance, and to provide enhancement in tone and style. In fact, technology can help by speeding up the whole process.

“Computer-aided tools are enhancing our efficiency, and at the same time we are also improving the translation quality, as the time we save can be channeled into the quality part,” Chan added.

Over the past 25 years, Hong Kong has endured a few turbulent periods. Chan recalled how the 2003 SARS outbreak impacted the company: “The market was gloomy. The economy of Hong Kong was in the doldrums.”

Another difficult time Chan recalled was the financial tsunami triggered by the subprime mortgage crisis in the United States in 2007 to 2008. The turmoil dealt a heavy blow to the U.S. financial sector, resulting in layoffs and budget cuts that directly impacted The Translation Business.

“When business slowed, we realized that some companies had fired the employees we had been in regular contact with,” Chan explained.

But having proved its mettle by riding out these two major storms for Hong Kong, the company is flourishing once again.

Looking to the future, The Translation Business is investing in the latest software and equipment, and training staff in the new systems, to keep ahead of technological development.

This nurturing of staff is also important, Chan said. Besides training employees and ensuring they are up-to-date with all the political and financial news, the company also encourages them to share their thoughts and opinions on a regular basis.

“After all,” Chan said, “as I always remind my team members, your horizons and vision are everything.” 🌸

「譯者是文化大使，協助達到有效溝通是他們的使命。」經典翻譯董事陳寶琮如是說。

事實上，自古以來，翻譯一直發揮文化交流的角色。對於商業翻譯來說，這一點至今仍然相當重要。

譯員受客戶委託，不僅要轉換語言，還要通過調整語調風格，協助客戶與目標受眾溝通。

陳寶琮補充：「商業翻譯猶如為客戶度身訂造一件衣服——我們因應每位客戶的不同需要，剪裁製成適合他們的譯文。」

經典翻譯於1994年創辦，今年正是成立25周年。該公司是一家精品型語言服務供應商，客戶包括環球銀行、資產管理公司及金融機構，專注於投資、財富管理、法律和公共關係等領域。

陳寶琮在大學主修中國語文及文學，其後負笈英國取得婦女研究碩士學位。畢業後，她在香港家庭計劃指導會擔任語言相關的工作，為教師、社工和學生翻譯和編輯性教育教材。她於1991年遷往澳洲，獲得工商管理碩士學位後，自此便轉到商業領域發展。

陳寶琮在數年後回港，為一家美國的人力資源培訓公司擔任翻譯工作。由於她在這個項目表現出色，受到客戶的青睞，遂獲薦予其他公司，包括大型跨國公司。

她說：「當時客源日益增長，足證自己有能力創業。」經典翻譯便由此誕生。

事實亦證明，當時是開設翻譯公司的良好時機。1990年代末，英國和歐美的

基金管理公司紛紛進軍香港。在一般的商業翻譯以外，經典翻譯還能在銀行和資產管理業翻譯方面建立廣泛和深入的專業知識。

陳寶琮表示，過去20年來，金融業經歷了許多變遷，包括市場對能夠產生社會或環境效益的「創效投資」的興趣與日俱增。她解釋，這類投資涵蓋水資源或可持續能源的專門基金，以至基礎更廣泛、專注於環境、社會及管治的基金等。

她說：「我很高興看到，投資者如今不再純粹著眼於賺取最大利潤。」作為婦女研究的畢業生，陳寶琮表示，眼見近年職場平等日漸受到重視，她亦感到欣慰。

### 質素為先

陳寶琮表示，要在翻譯業務上取得成功，質素必然是首要考慮。

「我們一貫的優質表現，令我們能夠在競爭激烈的市場中脫穎而出，而這亦是客戶與我們建立長久業務關係的原因。」

該公司的另一核心價值——也是最大的資產——便是人才。即使近年人工智能取得了巨大進展，包括翻譯能力，但她亦毫不憂慮。

她說：「人工智能不能取代翻譯員的角色。譯員是有見識的傳訊者，能夠分析思考，並具備良好的判斷力。」

關鍵在於語言中微妙的涵義，專業的譯者不但要理解字面的意義，還要了解每份文件的語境和目的。

陳寶琮解釋：「就翻譯方式而言，營銷材料與法律文件固然大不相同。」

「隨著語言不斷演變，譯者在判斷和決定最恰當的措詞方面，仍然扮演舉足輕重的角色。他們在這個特定領域具備知識和判斷力，能把原文的意思以最自然地道的方式轉換到譯文。」

由於經典翻譯專注提供金融翻譯服務，故譯者的角色尤為重要，因為他們需要掌握業界的專門知識，並對行業背景有更廣泛的理解。

她說：「基金管理與宏觀經濟息息相關，而現今的地緣政治局勢亦不容忽視。」

例如，翻譯有關英國脫歐文章

的譯員，便需要了解英國退出歐盟背後的種種觀點和複雜因素。如果字詞或短語沒有現成的翻譯，他們甚或要自創新的對應用語。

「因此，你不能只關注市場的升跌。譯者的見識和知識也至關重要，所以我們時常訓練和鼓勵翻譯員從工作中學習，不斷完善自己。」

### 與科技同行

儘管陳寶琮認為人工智能不會影響市場對譯員的需求，但她認同這項科技發展突飛猛進。

她說：「我們看到電腦輔助翻譯和機器翻譯的發展一日千里，行內人士正密切注視這些發展。」

在最理想的情況下，譯員可利用這些科技協助擬備初稿，然後再作「後期編輯」，包括修改和潤飾內容，以檢查準確度、意義和微妙的涵義，並改善語調和行文風格。事實上，科技有助加快整個翻譯過程。

她補充：「電腦輔助工具既可提升工作效率，而我們又可利用省下來的時間改善翻譯質素，一舉兩得。」

過去25年，香港經歷了一些動盪時期。陳寶琮憶述2003年沙士爆發對公司業務的影響：「市況黯淡。香港經濟不景。」

另一個艱難時期是2007年至2008年美國次按危機引發的金融海嘯。當時的市場風暴對美國金融業造成沉重的打擊，導致公司裁員和削減預算，直接影響經典翻譯的業務。

她解釋：「當生意轉淡時，我們意識到一些我們經常聯絡的客戶也遭到裁員。」

然而，該公司憑藉奮勇向前、堅毅不屈的精神，熬過了香港這兩大風暴，得以繼續蓬勃發展。

展望未來，經典翻譯正投放資源，引入最新的軟件和設備，同時培訓員工使用新系統，掌握科技發展。

陳寶琮表示，培育人才亦十分重要。公司除了培訓員工，確保他們緊貼政治和財經新聞，還鼓勵他們定期分享想法和意見。

她說：「畢竟，正如我時常提醒團隊成員，譯者的視野和見識決定一切。」

商業翻譯猶如為客戶度身訂造一件衣服——我們因應每位客戶的不同需要，剪裁製成適合他們的譯文。



Company: The Translation Business Ltd

公司名稱：經典翻譯有限公司

HKGCC Membership No. 總商會會員編號：HKT0764

Established 創辦年份：1994

Website 網站：<http://www.translationbusiness.com.hk/>