

Remarks by the Judges

英汉互译【医学】竞赛单元点评人文稿



2020中华笔译大赛
2020 CHINA WRITTEN TRANSLATION CONTEST
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A COMMITTEE OF THE IATEFL ASSOCIATION

2020 中华笔译大赛

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The year 2020 has been filled with titanic challenges, not least of which was the COVID-19 pandemic that swept through the globe. The disease and the world's response to it has clearly illustrated the need for greater medical knowledge and medical literacy among the general populace. Translation plays a key role in the dissemination of information and knowledge in our modern, interconnected world, and thus translators must shoulder the responsibility of clearly and accurately rendering medical texts into other languages.

To do so, however, requires first understanding the nature of medical texts, as well as the unique challenges and strategies for translating them. Medical and healthcare texts do not exist in a vacuum; instead, every text has its purpose, intended audience, and wider context. This means every medical and healthcare text would ideally be clearly and accurately written to fulfill its purpose, in terms of the ideas it is meant to convey and the readers it is conveying them to.

Consequently, the translator of a medical text must first determine what the main idea of the text is, including the theoretical and procedural information contained therein. Only

by doing so can the translator develop a firm grasp of the primary goals and ideas of the text, and then—and only then—will the translator be able to produce a suitable rendering. The texts used in this competition are descriptive texts, and thus the translators should work with this in mind.

Next, the translator should remember that medical terminology must be used accurately and precisely. The very nature of medical science means that there is little ambiguity in medical terminology. Instead, every term has its definition and context, which must be rendered correctly in a translation. Moreover, how each term is used in the text—for example, its part of speech or context rules—can affect its meaning in the text. The substitution of one term with an inappropriate replacement can literally be a matter of life and death in a medical translation. Furthermore, it is also worth considering who the intended audience of the text is, and using the medical terms accordingly. For example, medical terms in English are dominated by Greco-Latin prefixes and suffixes, which means they are often inaccessible to the layperson. As a result, when translating for a non-technical audience, the translator may sometimes need to use a more accessible version of the term. The ability to tell when to use a technical term and when to use a colloquial one may very well be what separates a good translator from a great one.

Finally, it would be difficult for any text, whether medical or otherwise, to clearly express its message if it is not written correctly. The grammar, collocation, expressions, linkages, and syntactical structures of the text should be free of errors, otherwise there may be vague or misleading passages. The best translators are often also excellent writers, ones

who can coherently, accurately, and correctly transfer their ideas into words, so that they can be read and understood with no ambiguity or confusion. For descriptive texts such as these, the right language, tone, and register should also be used in order to create the best possible translation.

Many of the entries in this translation competition have demonstrated a good understanding of medical concepts, the effective application of translation strategies, and strong descriptive writing skills. However, the best entries were the ones that managed to distinguish themselves in all of these aspects. Issues such as the ongoing pandemic, societal aging, and environmental degradation will likely lead to a greater need for medical translation in the near future, and no doubt these outstanding translators will be leading the charge.