

附件 3

评审简表

申报单位（盖章）： 申报人姓名：徐常铎 语种：英语 拟评资格：英语一级笔译 审核人签字：

一、基本情况及主要经历

姓 名	徐常铎	性 别	男	出生年月	1994 年 1 月	参加工作时间	2018 年 6 月	现行政职务		
最高学历	硕士	毕业学校	美国波士顿学院		所学专业	政治学	毕业时间	2018 年 5 月	学位	文学硕士
现专业技术职务（资格）		二级笔译	取得时间	2019 年	同级专业技术职务取得时间		2018 年 6 月	从事本专业年限		7 年
专业技术工作起止时间		工 作 单 位			从事何种专业技术工作		取得何种专业技术职称		取得职称时间	
2018 年 6 月~2018 年 9 月		中国扶贫基金会			研究员					
2018 年 12 月~2020 年 12 月		北京大学			政策研究员、英语翻译					
2020 年 12 月~今		自由职业			英语翻译					
年 月~ 年 月										
年 月~ 年 月										
年 月~ 年 月										
年 月~ 年 月										

注 1：审核人请在首行签字并在表首加盖公章。

注 2：“同级专业技术职务及取得时间”是指由其它专业技术职务转评为翻译专业技术职务人员，其原专业技术职务取得时间。

二、任现职（取得现资格）以来的工作业绩

1. 承担重点项目情况

序号	重点项目名称	本人负责部分	级 别			项目进行时间	出版单位及时间	完成情况及效果
			地市级	省部级	国家级			

2. 获奖情况（填地市级一等奖，省部级一、二等奖，国家级一、二、三等奖）

序号	获奖题目	奖项名称	获奖级别及等级	颁奖单位	获奖时间	本人承担内容
	《制度为什么重要》	2023-2024 年度最受政治学人欢迎的专业著作	译著类	《政治学人》编辑部	2025 年 3 月	译者

三、任现职（取得现资格）以来完成工作任务情况

审定稿字数（万字）	
（口译人员需提供担任国际会议、大型会议等翻译任务的情况） 本人自 2020 年 12 月任现职起承担笔译工作见下： 在担任自由译员期间（2020.12-今），主要从事社会科学方面专著的翻译工作，部分工作（包含尚未出版的，后附出版社合同）有： 《自然与城市：城市设计与规划中的生态要素》，商务印书馆，2024 年 7 月，负责全书审校工作； 《制度为什么重要：政治科学中的新制度主义》，中国人民大学出版社，2024 年 9 月； 《保守党与民主的诞生》，格致出版社，进行中； 《女沙皇遗失的宝藏：叶卡捷琳娜大帝、一幅黄金时代杰作和一场传奇海难》，北京：生活·读书·新知三联书店，进行中； 《作为再分配方式的宽容：拉丁美洲非正式福利的政治》，格致出版社，进行中。	

四、任现职（取得现资格）以来发表、出版的译著（文）或论文

序号	译著（文）或论文题目	出版、发表在何处	作品字数（万）	发表时间	独（合）译	本人在合译中所承担部分及字数（万）
1	《设计结合自然——刻不容缓》	中国建筑工业出版社		2024 年 6 月	合译	序跋、导言、后记、图表说明、注释
2	《自然与城市：城市设计与规划中的生态要素》	商务印书馆	272,590	2024 年 7 月	合译	全书校对、修订、润色
3	《制度为什么重要：政治科学中的新制度主义》	中国人民大学出版社	262,000	2024 年 9 月	独译	

五、出国进修情况

进修起止时间	国 家	内容及专业
2022 年 8 月~今	美国	政治学；攻读博士学位，从事比较政治方向的研究和教学
年 月~ 年 月		
年 月~ 年 月		

六、国内进修情况

进修起止时间	进修内容及专业
年 月~ 年 月	
年 月~ 年 月	
年 月~ 年 月	
年 月~ 年 月	

七、出国工作情况

工作起止时间	任务
年 月~ 年 月	
年 月~ 年 月	
年 月~ 年 月	

年 月~ 年 月	
----------	--

八、单位推荐意见（1000 字左右）

单位负责人签字：单位：（盖章）

年 月 日

注 1：本页必须加盖单位公章。

注 2：“单位推荐意见”主要按照《翻译专业人员职称评价基本标准》中相应等级任职条件的要求对申报人的水平、业绩给予评价和推荐

Translating Social Sciences: Challenges and Reflections

Introduction

To translate in the social sciences is to engage in a form of scholarship. It is not merely the transfer of words across languages but the reconstruction of concepts, arguments, evidence, and methodologies in a new intellectual environment. The translator is not a neutral intermediary but a participant in both intellectual communities, one who bears responsibility for the accuracy, clarity, and integrity of the ideas being transmitted. My own practice as a translator has been inseparable from my academic training in political science, and this dual identity has shaped my reflections on what it means to translate responsibly.

The Necessity of Disciplinary Training

Emerging from experience, the most fundamental requirement for translating social science texts is disciplinary training. Without it, even the most linguistically gifted translator will stumble, because the meaning of social science concepts – usually highly context-dependent – is inseparable from the intellectual debates in which they are embedded. Words in this domain are not neutral tokens that can be transferred mechanically from one language to another; they are condensed arguments, carrying with them decades of theoretical disputes, methodological assumptions, and disciplinary conventions. To translate

them without understanding their lineage is to risk producing a text that is not only awkward but actively misleading.

The term “agency” is perhaps the clearest example. In American politics, “agency” is used in the bureaucratic sense, referring to administrative units smaller than departments, such as the Environmental Protection Agency or the Federal Emergency Management Agency. In more generalized theory of political sociology, however, “agency” refers to the capacity of actors to make choices and to act independently, often in tension with structural constraints that surround them. A translator who has not been trained in these disciplines may fail to recognize the distinction, rendering both usages with the same Chinese term, or worse, choosing a literal equivalent that makes sense in neither context. The result is a text that distorts the author’s argument and confuses readers.

This problem is not only confined to “agency.” Consider the concept of “checks and balances.” In American constitutional studies, it refers to the institutional design that distributes power among branches of government to prevent tyranny. If translated literally as “制衡” without further explanation, the term may be intelligible but stripped of its institutional specificity. A reader unfamiliar with American politics might imagine a vague notion of mutual restraint as a temporary measure of expediency, rather than a concrete constitutional mechanism.

Similarly, “rent-seeking” in economics does not mean seeking to rent property, but rather the pursuit of economic gain through manipulation of the political environment rather than productive activity. Without disciplinary training, a translator might render it as “租金寻求,” which is nonsensical in Chinese, rather than the established term “寻租.” When translating *Why Institutions Matter* (2024), authors’ terminology frequently travels across disciplines for analogical metaphors. For example, the original text refers to the influence by institutions as “the ‘work’ done by institutions.” At first glance, a careless translator might subconsciously take “work” as “effort.” But the quotation marks around “work” looked curiously suspectable to me – indeed, the authors use the term in physics, “work” as “the product of the force strength and the distance traveled.” That is, this context-susceptible “work” points to the ends (that institutions intend to reach) rather than the means (by which they reach).

These examples illustrate why disciplinary training is not an optional luxury but a necessity. A translator who has studied a certain discipline is able to recognize when a term is being used in its technical sense and when it is being used colloquially. They can distinguish between “capital” as financial assets and “social capital” as networks of trust and reciprocity. They can see that “legitimacy” in political theory is not simply “合法性” but a contested concept involving normative justification and empirical

belief. Without such training, the translator is blind to these nuances, and the resulting text is at best clumsy, at worst misleading.

Moreover, disciplinary training provides not only the ability to recognize concepts but also the ability to anticipate debates. When translating *Why Institutions Matter* (2024), for example, the authors distinguish three generations of institutionalist theories. While using a common set of core concepts and seemingly similar arguments, each of these strands has its own emphasized aspects and theoretical commitments, even in one same word. A translator without such background may flatten the differences, producing a text that erases the very debates the author is trying to illuminate.

Disciplinary training also equips the translator with humility, as one better realizes the complexity of its concepts and the difficulty of rendering them across languages. This humility is essential, because it prevents the translator from presume a term's surface meaning and take it for grants or assuming that a quick dictionary lookup will suffice. It instills the habit of checking, of consulting, of reading more deeply before committing to a translation. In this sense, disciplinary training is not only a foundation of competence but also a safeguard against complacency.

The consequences of mistranslation are not trivial. In the social sciences, ideas circulate through translations. Less satisfactory translations – not to mention total mistranslations – of key concepts may

build a generation of students and scholars on a flawed foundation. And hence, I insist that translators of academic works must see themselves as scholars, not merely as linguists. To translate responsibly is to participate in the intellectual life of the discipline, to recognize the stakes of the debates, and to ensure that ideas are transmitted with fidelity.

For all above reasons, I regard disciplinary training as the foundation of social science translation. It is what enables the translator to move beyond surface meanings to the conceptual core of the text. It is what allows the translator to preserve the integrity of debates across languages. And it is what ensures that translation serves not only as a linguistic bridge but as a faithful transmission of knowledge.

The Imperative of Continual Learning

If disciplinary training provides the foundation for social science translation, continual learning is the scaffolding that sustains it. No matter how strong one's academic background may be, no translator can possibly master all the subfields that a single book might traverse. Social science writing is inherently interdisciplinary: a work of political science may invoke archaeological findings, a sociological study may draw on legal doctrines, and a historical monograph may reference architectural or artistic terminology. To translate responsibly is therefore to accept that one must always be a student, constantly supplementing one's knowledge in order to preserve the integrity of the text.

The temptation to rely on general-purpose dictionaries or machine translation tools is strong, especially when deadlines loom closer. Yet these tools are blunt instruments. They provide surface-level equivalences but rarely capture the technical precision required in academic discourse. The architectural term “setback” illustrates this danger. In everyday English, a setback is a disappointment or reversal, and any dictionary will happily offer “挫折” as the Chinese equivalent. But in urban planning, a setback refers to the horizontal distance from a building to the street or neighboring structures, or the area produced by a setback. To translate it as “挫折” is not merely inelegant; it is wrong. It misleads the reader into thinking the author is describing a failure rather than a design feature. Only by consulting specialized glossaries and planning codes could I arrive at the correct rendering, “缩进距离.” This experience reinforced the lesson that translation without continued learning is irresponsible.

Two episodes from translating *The Tsarina's Lost Treasure* (forthcoming) underscore this point of continual learning, and they do so in distinct ways that merit separate treatment. The first concerns Rembrandt and his pigment sources. In the original text, the author connects his ceased procurement of azurite – a copper carbonate used historically as a blue pigment – from Hungary with the Ottoman siege of Budapest. At first glance, the account seems plausible; seventeenth-century European trade routes were vulnerable to military conflicts and skirmishes. Yet continual learning obliges the translator to stop and

investigate. A closer look at the chronology of Budapest reveals that the city was under the Ottoman rule during most of Rembrandt's lifetime and that the major siege disrupting Ottoman control occurred in 1686, led by Habsburg-Polish forces. In practical terms, the translator must correct the attribution of the siege in a footnote and specify the pigment accurately, preserving the author's narrative momentum while ensuring historical and technical precision. Without such checks, a translation can transmit errors that accumulate authority simply by appearing in print.

The second episode centers on Gerrit Dou's workshop. The text states that Dou's north-facing window permitted unobstructed all-day sunlight to his Leiden workshop. Here again, continual learning mandates verification. In the Northern Hemisphere, sunlight strikes from the south, and certainly, north-facing windows do not receive direct sunlight.

Why, then, would Dou's north-facing window be described as a source of light? Of course, the easiest course of action for the translator is to transmit whatever the author writes directly into translated text without hesitation. Yet, it would put reputational assets of both publishing houses, the authors, and the translator himself in grave jeopardy, faced with potential challenges by future readers. Continually learning translators are expected to check the details and make sense of the text. Actually, local geography answers. I ascertained the location of Gerrit Dou's old workshop and found it faced a broad canal, which reflects sunlight into the space through the window, aligned with the following description of

the light as “glittering.” This is not a trivial clarification. Misdescribing the light suggests a misunderstanding of both the craft and the environmental conditions that shaped it. To handle this responsibly, the translator must consult urban geography sources, historical maps, and architectural descriptions, in order to confirm the workshop’s orientation and surroundings, and then annotate the passage to explain why “north light” in this specific site supported Dou’s meticulous technique. The goal is not to outshine the author, but to prevent the drift from plausible narrative to physical implausibility.

Separated and examined in turn, these cases demonstrate complementary dimensions of continual learning. In both cases, the translator’s task is to triangulate claims across disciplines -- art history, urban preservation, military history – so that each term and assertion lands with the intended meaning in Chinese. More broadly, continual learning disciplines judgment. It teaches the translator when to accept an author’s phrasing, when to query it, and when to intervene with a carefully framed note. It also cultivates a habit of source triangulation: never relying on a single compendium or an undifferentiated “dictionary,” but assembling a small constellation of authoritative references tailored to the problem at hand. This habit protects the translation from the false confidence of superficially fluent text. Fluency without verification can carry errors smoothly into the target language; learning ensures that fluency is anchored to fact.

Finally, continual learning sustains humility. Every unfamiliar pigment, every workshop window, every river bend is a reminder that knowledge is situated – technical, local, and contingent. That awareness strengthens the translator’s craft. It keeps attention fixed on the reader’s need for precision and context, and it also reinforces the translator’s ethical obligation to the author. When a detail is historically inverted or physically implausible, the translator’s quiet correction – placed in a footnote, not obtrusively in the main text – turns potential confusion into clarity. This is the work of learning in translation: not ornamental scholarship, but the steady practice of making meanings accurate, intelligible, and true.

Multilingual Contexts and Comparative Scholarship

Social science works are often comparative, and comparative scholarship rarely confines itself to English. References to French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, or Latin sources abound. The translator must therefore be prepared to navigate multiple languages, verifying names, titles, and bibliographic details. This is not a matter of cosmetic accuracy but of scholarly credibility. A mistranscribed name or a mistranslated title can undermine the authority of the entire translation. This requires that I, when dealing with comparative research that employs multilingual primary and secondary sources, make the best of translation tools available and navigate them with a foundational knowledge of cross-language etymology.

For example, in *Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy*, Harvard political scientist Daniel Ziblatt compares broadly conservatives in nineteenth-century European countries, in terms of how they resisted mass democracy through varieties of manipulative measures. I looked them up respectively in each dictionary and determined a proper translation in Chinese on basis of the word's etymological origin. For example, incumbent elites in Portugal at that time employed a method they called “*rotativismo*.” This word obviously corresponds to “rotation,” as the governing exclusive group of elites occupied official posts in rotation rather than actual shifts of power – in this regard, I translate it as “轮流转替” in Chinese.

The task is complicated further when multiple translators are involved. Without coordination, inconsistencies proliferate. A shared glossary and a commitment to uniform standards are essential. In this sense, translation is not only an individual craft but also a collective enterprise. The translator participates in a community of practice, and the quality of the final product depends on the rigor of that community.

Workflow and Methodological Reflections

Behind every quality translation lies a method, and in social sciences that method must be both feasibly rigorous and flexible. Translation is not a linear process of replacing words but a cyclical practice of comprehension, interpretation, and expression. The first stage is

immersion. Before attempting to render a single sentence, I must read the text in its entirety, grasping its argument, structure, and stylistic register. This immersion is not passive reading but active engagement: identifying the author's theoretical commitments, noting recurring concepts, and mapping the reasoning architecture. Without this stage, translation risks becoming a patchwork of disconnected sentences, each perhaps accurate in isolation but incoherent as a whole.

Having mastered the general gist, the translator moves to the stage of interpretation. Here the task is to identify key terms, ambiguous phrases, and culturally specific references. Interpretation requires judgment: Is a term being used in its technical sense or in its everyday meaning? Is a metaphor conventional in the source language but obscure in the target language? There is no mechanical “panacea” answer to all these questions; they require the translator to weigh context, disciplinary background, and the expectations of the target audience at the scene.

Drafting follows interpretation, but drafting is not the end. A first draft is always provisional, a hypothesis about how the text might sound in the target language. It must be tested, revised, and refined. This is where methodological reflection becomes crucial. Translators must be willing to revisit earlier decisions, to adjust terminology in light of later passages, and to ensure consistency across chapters. Polishing is the final stage, but it is not merely cosmetic. It involves reading the translation as a reader would, asking how the argument flows and whether the sentences are clear.

In social science texts, clarity is paramount. A translation that is faithful but unreadable fails in its purpose. Conversely, a translation that is fluent but unfaithful betrays the author. The translator must therefore balance these two core criteria, ensuring that the text is accurate and accessible.

Methodological reflection also extends to collaboration. Many social science translations are team efforts, involving multiple translators, editors, and reviewers. Even in the most parsimonious fashion, the translator must work closely with one editor. In such cases, workflow must include mechanisms for coordination: shared glossaries, style guides, and discussions in form of notes in the margins. Without these, inconsistencies proliferate, and the final product suffers.

Ultimately, methodological reflection is about cultivating habits of mind: patience, humility, and attentiveness. It is about recognizing that translation is never finished but only abandoned at a point of sufficient adequacy. It is about accepting that every decision is provisional, open to revision in light of new insights. In this sense, workflow is not a mechanical sequence but a philosophical stance: a commitment to rigor, to reflection, and to the pursuit of faithfulness in the face of complexity.

Footnotes Matter!

If workflow is the skeleton of translation, footnotes are its nervous system, carrying signals of clarification, correction, and context. In the social sciences, footnotes are not optional embellishments but essential

instruments of scholarly responsibility. They allow the translator to preserve the flow of the main text while providing readers with the information they need to understand it fully.

Consider the metaphor “squaring the circle” in *Why Institutions Matter* (2024). To an English-speaking audience, it may be a familiar idiom for attempting the impossible. To a Chinese reader, however, the phrase may be opaque. A literal translation would puzzle, and a paraphrase would dilute the metaphor’s force. A footnote, by contrast, allows the translator to explain that “化圆为方” refers to the ancient Greek geometric problem of constructing a square with the area of a given circle by using only a finite number of steps with a compass and straightedge, later proven impossible in the nineteenth century. And the authors use this geometrical problem to describe the decision-making process in which myriad conflicting opinions are forged into one policy decision through deliberation. With this explanation, the reader can appreciate both the metaphor and its resonance.

Footnotes also serve to correct errors. When a text misstates a historical fact or geographical detail, the translator faces a dilemma: to reproduce the error faithfully or to correct it silently. Neither option is satisfactory. Reproducing the error misleads readers; correcting it silently distorts the author’s voice. A footnote resolves the dilemma by preserving the author’s words while alerting the reader to the inaccuracy. In this way, the translator fulfills their duty to both author and reader.

Yet footnotes are often regretfully neglected. Because they are usually considered dispensable and do not count, many translators may feel dis-incentivized to include them. Publishers may discourage them, fearing that they heighten costs and burden readers. The result is that some translations appear smooth but conceal inaccuracies, omissions, or ambiguities. This neglect is far from marginal. In social sciences, where concepts should be contested and evidence be scrutinized, the absence of necessary clarifications can lead to serious misunderstandings.

To champion footnotes is therefore to champion transparency. A translation without footnotes may be easier to read, but it is also less trustworthy. A translation with footnotes acknowledges the complexities of the task, the limitations of equivalence, and the responsibility of the translator. It invites the reader into the process, showing where decisions were made, where difficulties arose, and where clarifications are necessary. Far from being a distraction, footnotes are a mark of scholarly integrity.

In my own practice, I have come to see footnotes as a form of dialogue. They are where the translator speaks directly to the reader, explaining choices, noting uncertainties, and offering context. They help transform translation from a monologue into a conversation, one in which the reader is facing the translator. In this sense, footnotes embody the ethos of social science itself, openness, dialogue, and critical engagement.

For these reasons, I argue that footnotes matter profoundly. They are not marginalia but central to the craft of translation. They ensure that translations are not only faithful but also transparent, not only accurate but also intelligible. They remind us that translation is not the erasure of difference but the negotiation of it, and that this negotiation must be visible to the reader. To neglect footnotes is to conceal the very work of translation; to embrace them is to honor it.

Conclusion and Future Work

To translate social science texts is to participate in the life of scholarship. It is to assume responsibility for the faithful transmission of ideas, for the clarification of concepts, and for the correction of errors. It is to act as a mediator between authors and readers in two distinct languages, between disciplines and even sub-fields of research, between past debates and future inquiries. The translator's task is demanding, but it is also indispensable. Through translation, we do not merely transfer words; we reconstruct worlds of thought in new linguistic landscapes. That is the mission I embrace, and it is the conviction that will continue to guide my work.