## 英语表达的推敲一例

最近,我和同事在为一本《组织学与胚胎学》教材编写"男性生殖系统"一章。该教材的特别新颖之处是要求作者在每章末摘编一节代表学科新进展的英文材料(约 500 个单词)。我决定自己撰写一段有关 Hormonal Male Contraception(激素男性避孕)的内容,其第一句话打算表达"避孕是男女双方的共同责任"的意思,第二句话接着表达"全球有过半数生育年龄夫妇都采取有某种避孕措施"。

从一位男科学者的一篇论文中我见到了下面这句话:

• Family planning has been a shared male and female responsibility.

基于此,我想把我的第一句话写成:

• Family planning is a responsibility to be shared by both men and women.

想到这是教材内容,最好能让学生从中既学到医学知识,又学到英语,其英语表达必须准确、地道,所以我打算求助一位英语是母语的同行专家。我 e-mail 给他请他修改,并告诉他从 2004 年起可能每年都有一万名左右的中国医学生要读它。第二天他 e-mail 给我,把这句话改为

• Family planning is the shared responsibility of both men and women.

过了一天,他又 e-mail 给我,把这句话改为

• Family planning is the shared responsibility of the partners.

我还是不太满意,于是通过电子邮件另外写给他 6 个不同的参考句,请他再斟酌, 看是否有哪句的表达更好,其中包括如下两句:

- Family planning is a responsibility that needs to be shared by both the male and the female.
- Family planning is a responsibility to be shared by both the male and the female partners.

次日,他回了电子邮件,选中了后一句。

## 反复修改这句话主要是出于以下几个方面的考虑:

- 1. 是用"the responsibility"好还是"a responsibility"好。夫妇间的责任该不会只有一个吧,因此后者应更好。
- 2. 是用① "men/women"、② "male/female"好还是③ "partners"好。①与②的区别在这里可能好比"男人/女人"与"男性/女性"之间的区别,后者似更好。同性恋者也是"partners",但不涉及避孕问题,因此这里最好不单独使用③。
- 3. 是用 "the male and the female "好还是 "both the male and the female "好。"both " 含有双方的意味,有强调作用;鉴于目前男性参与避孕的相对较少(约为女性的一半),且有下降趋势,用上它应更好。
- 4. 是用① "a shared responsibility of "、② "a responsibility that needs to be shared by "还是③ "a responsibility to be shared by "好。②与③包含有"要求"或"应该"的意味,应该比①好。②与③相比,前者稍显累赘。

由此可见,用母语表达思想需要推敲,用外语表达更要推敲;学生写作文需要推敲, 学者写论文更要推敲;不仅要在语法上推敲,更要从内涵上推敲。

(形态学研究所 杨正伟)