

Interpretation Strategies of Diplomatic Interpretation with the Support of the Perspective of Skopos Theory

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Abstract: As the gradually accelerated internationalization and the increasingly active attitude toward globalization, diplomacy plays a role of greater significance nowadays. Therefore, diplomatic interpretation becomes more and more valued as a path to exchange culture, economy, and political opinions and topics of many other fields. For a better environment of diplomacy with countries all over the world and to improve China's national image, the interpreter takes the responsibility for cultivating and improving his/her ability of diplomatic interpretation. To achieve the aforementioned goal, this paper expounds on the features of diplomatic interpretation the interpretation strategies of diplomatic interpretation. So as to expound it more well-founded, Skopos Theory is introduced as the cornerstone of the interpretation strategies. The theory includes three rules: Skopos Rule, the Coherence Rule and the Fidelity Rule. Besides the part of the theory, this paper lists six examples excerpted from the transcripts of diplomatic interpretation of formal diplomatic occasions and official diplomatic events so as to expound the specific methods and skills in practice as well, which interpreter has the necessity to use these interpretation strategies with flexibility.

Keywords: diplomatic interpretation, Skopos Theory, interpretation strategies

1. Introduction

Since reform and Opening-up, with the rapid development and foreign policy based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, China has played an increasingly significant role in the world's political and economic stage. With the frequent diplomatic exchanges, the accuracy of the spread of China's position and perspectives through policies with Chinese characteristics needs to be conveyed. However, sometimes, different cultural backgrounds and languages become barriers to international communication. Interpretation, as the link and the bridge of international communication, takes responsibility for bringing people from diverse cultural backgrounds together and making them comprehend each other thoroughly. On the one hand, as one of the sorts of foreign publicity translations, the interpretation must cater to the cultural habits and linguistic habits of the receivers of the target language. On the other hand, the goal of diplomatic interpretation is to spread Chinese culture. Thus, besides interpreting the meaning of the words and phrases in the source language, the interpreter has the responsibility to express cultural connotations. To accomplish the tasks of diplomatic interpretation, interpretation strategies ought to be applied. In this paper, Skopos Theory, a practical and appropriate theory in the translation or interpretation field that is certified to be

available to variable interpretation, is expounded as the support of these interpretation strategies, and examples selected from transcripts of interpretation of formal diplomatic occasions are listed as the specific occasions where these strategies can be effective to solve the problems during the process of conversational understanding.

2. Features of Diplomatic Interpretation and Skopos Theory

First of all, diplomatic interpretation, as one of the sorts of foreign publicity translations, has remarkable features. Publicity translation is a special form of translation aimed at making the world understand China in the context of globalization [1], which means in the process of diplomatic interpretation, the interpreters take the responsibility of conveying information from source language accurately and manage to ensure of the reliability of his/her interpretation. As a formal and serious occasion, a diplomatic occasion possesses the features of political solid nature and a great impact on the relations of two or more countries. Thus, the usage of words and phrases should be the combination of a sense of principle and appropriate strategies with the characteristics of strictness, high generalization and the connotation of culture [2]. Since the basic aim and requirement of diplomatic interpretation are clear in the above, general translation theory, which guides the interpretation strategies of the diplomatic interpretation, and specific examples and methods of diplomatic interpretation that are analyzed by the theory will be specifically expounded in the following.

Skopos Theory is a ground-breaking translation theory belonging to functional translation theory. It is a practical theory model whose core concentrates on the purpose of translation and the improving demand for translators or interpreters. The school's representatives, Katharina Reiss, Hans Vermeer, and Christiane Nord proposed the theory including these rules: Skopos Rule, Coherence Rule, and Fidelity Rule. Among these rules, the pivotal rule is the Skopos Rule, which includes the "purpose of translators or interpreters, the communicative purposes of the translation or interpretation, and the method of translation or interpretation to achieve the two aforementioned purposes" [3]. From the explanation of the Skopos Rule, the principle of this functional translation theory is clear: the purpose of translation or interpretation decides the process of translation or interpretation. Thus, the purpose is fixed, while the means and methods of translation or interpretation can be flexible, which means as long as the purpose of translation or interpretation is guaranteed to be achieved and the translation or interpretation is easy for the receivers of the target language to comprehend, the process is decided by the translators or interpreters according to personal habits and the meaning of the source language, improving the significance of the role of the translators or interpreters and offering more possibilities for the exploration of translation or interpretation strategies, which means "according to purposes of translation or interpretation, translators or interpreters have the right to choose the translation or interpretation strategies of literal one or free one" [3]. The other way around, it is decided by the purpose of translation or interpretation that adopts literal translation or free translation.

The second rule of the Coherence Rule and the last rule of the Fidelity Rule are related to receivers of their target language and the relation between translation or interpretation and the source language. Coherence means that translation or interpretation has to cater to the linguistic habits and cultural customs of the receivers of the target language so as to provide convenience for them to comprehend the speech of the speaker [4]. This explanation can be expounded in this way: the primary purpose of translation or interpretation is to spread information accurately. It is feasible for translators or interpreters to achieve the primary goal that using the method of following the Coherence Rule. Eventually, Fidelity means translation or interpretation should be loyal to the speech of the source language. While it is worth mentioning that the extent of fidelity to the original address not only relies on the purpose of translation or interpretation but also is relevant to the comprehension of translators or interpreters towards the actual speech of source language [5]. Skopos Rule, which serves as the

fundamental tenet of Skopos Theory, leads to the conclusion that Skopos Rule is a leading factor commanding another two rules, which means even if Skopos Rule contradicts another two rules in some cases, translators or interpreters need to follow Skopos Rule and place it into priority.

The basic general translation theory is expounded above. Specific cases and methods of diplomatic interpretation, including the usage of words and phrases, will be elaborated in the following.

There are some expressions with distinctive features in Chinese, including idioms and allusions, and common sayings, which are quoted by statesmen and spokesmen at press conferences or other diplomatic occasions. The reasons for using these expressions with distinctive features can be classified into approximately three types: asserting an official position, demonstrating the processing methods with Chinese characteristics towards hot news of international current politics, and introducing policies, political tactics, and political achievements. In addition, some distinctive political concepts and political ethic characteristics of Chinese style are of great significance as well. These diplomatic appeals need to be expressed accurately to the receivers of the target language. Further analysis will be expounded then.

3. Examples of Specific Application

Example 1:

各国生活在一个地球村，人类实际上是一个命运共同体。

Every country is a part of the same global village and humanity is in fact, a community with a shared future.

Example 2:

政治操弄只会给病毒以可乘之机，以邻为壑只能被病毒各个击破，无视科学只会让病毒乘虚而入。

Political manipulation will give the virus loopholes to exploit; a beggar-thy-neighbor approach will make each of us more vulnerable; denial of science will enable the virus to wreak greater havoc.

Example 3:

外交工作的重大决策和成就，都得益于党中央的统揽全局、运筹帷幄。

China's significant diplomatic decisions and successes are all attributable to the coordination and leadership of the CPC Central Committee.

Example 4:

中国外交是党领导下的人民外交事业。中国共产党是中国人民的主心骨，也是中国外交的定盘星。

The CPC is the backbone of the Chinese people and then anchor of China's diplomacy.

Example 5:

落实“爱国者治港”，是推进“一国两制”事业、保持香港长治久安的实际需要。

In order to advance the One Country, Two Systems cause and sustain long-term stability in Hong Kong, the action to assure “patriots administering Hong Kong” is necessary.

Example 6:

隔岸观火最终会殃及自身，落井下石到头来将信誉扫地。

When a disaster wreaks havoc, watching from an apparently safe distance and sitting idle will eventually backfire. Pointing fingers at others will simply serve to harm one's own reputation.

In Example 1, “地球村” is interpreted as “global village”. The concept is put forward by Canadian scholar who majored in mass communication named Marshall McLuhan in his book Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man. Therefore, the word “global village” is an imported word. Moreover, the metaphor of the word is not strange and unfamiliar to the receivers of the target language. Thus, one of the interpretation strategies can be concluded as follows: if a word mentioned by the speaker

is an imported word borrowed from the target language, the interpreter can use the original word directly but not interpret its meaning to ensure acceptance by the receivers, and if the metaphor of the target word is universal to receivers of the target language, the interpreter can interpret it from the source language to target language as well.

These words, “命运共同体” and “爱国者治港” refer to certain specific political ideas of Chinese style and some policies that China is implementing in Examples 1 and 5, respectively. The interpreter must maintain consistency while taking into account the linguistic and cultural customs of the target language, English. The Fidelity Rule must also be followed by the interpreter. In other words, the interpreter must achieve deverbalization, which entails separating from the original expression of sentences and words in the source language and recombining the expression's structure [6]. The word “命运” in “命运共同体” refers to the common future of humanity rather than the English word “fate”, and “共同体” highlights the strong relationships between the various racial groups and nationalities that make up humans. After understanding its meaning, the interpreter must combine its structure again, and “命运共同体” is interpreted as “a community with a shared future”. “Administrate” is a nice illustration of the Fidelity Rule being used to choose words that correctly convey the speech's meaning from the source language and official political standpoint. Most often, “govern” is the initial answer when someone says “治”. While the definition of “administrate” stresses the direct administration of affairs, and “govern” emphasizes the formal power to take command in a location. As a result, the word “administrate” correctly captures Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and its citizens' position as rulers of both the nation and their Chinese hometowns.

In Example 2, “可乘之机”, “以邻为壑” and “乘虚而入”, in Example 3, “统揽全局” and “运筹帷幄”, in Example 4, “主心骨” and “定盘星”, in Example 5, “长治久安”, and in Example 6, “隔岸观火”, “殃及自身”, and “落井下石”, these words are all idioms and allusions, and common saying. These words are all culture-loaded words with vivid ethnic characteristics that are influenced by diverse factors of ethnic lifestyle, social customs and habits, ideology, and, arts and culture [7]. In diplomatic interpretation, the interpreter must interpret these culture-loaded words with rigor and make efforts to express the marrow of Chinese culture effectively and accurately to the international community [8].

“乘虚而入,” “长治久安” and “落井下石” are broken away from their original forms and are directly explained and interpreted according to their meaning because “the object of interpretation is the intrinsic meaning of the source language but not the words or phrases including the intrinsic meaning” [9].

“以邻为壑” is interpreted as the “beggar-thy-neighbor approach”, which is a common saying in English-- the target language, easy for the receivers of the target language to comprehend (Coherence Rule) and increasing the intimacy in culture and language to the receivers, which is convenient for Chinese culture to widespread and needs the profound language skills and knowledge of the cultural background of the interpreter.

“可乘之机” is interpreted as “give the virus loopholes to exploit.”, Besides interpreting its meaning in the source language, the interpretation includes the vivid emotional attitude with the words “loophole” and “to exploit”, adding the implicit meaning not directly mentioned in the speech in the source language and expressing the distinctive attitude of the official position.

“统筹全局,” “运筹帷幄,” “主心骨” and “定盘星” are all interpreted by the method of subtractive interpretation method which deletes the icing on the cake and only preserves the main part of the meaning in the source language, ensuring the accuracy of the information to capacity and reducing the burden of the receivers to comprehend the information and the burden of the interpreter to interpret.

“隔岸观火最终会殃及自身” is particular and needs to be analyzed for three reasons. The interpretation of “隔岸观火” is split as two parts-- “watching from an apparently safe distance and sitting idle” and “backfire”. The first reason why the interpreter interprets the idiom and allusion in this way is that receivers of the target language-- English, may not understand the meaning of the analogy of the word in the source language-- Chinese, owing to unfamiliarity if the interpreter translates it word for word, and in some cases, the source language and the target language cannot be totally on an equal footing of literal and real meaning. Thus, the interpreter needs to add the necessary background and information [10]. The second reason is that the method uses a rhetorical device-- zeugma. “火” are common used by “隔岸观火” and “殃及自身”. “火”, the expression in the source language, is preserved in target language and turns into “backfire”, an expression with characteristic in target language-- English with a superb language skill, meaning both the danger in “隔岸观火” and consequences going against one’s wishes in “殃及自身”. The third reason is that the interpreter completes the logic of transition, ensuring the accuracy of the expression in the source language and keeping Coherence Rule.

4. Conclusions

Through these general translation or interpretation theory and the specific analysis of these examples, it can conclude that under the basic structure of Skopos Theory, diplomatic interpretation should ensure the comprehension of the speech in the source language of the interpreter and the accuracy of the expression of information in the source language, and the methods of interpretation with language skills and cultural background must be used with flexibility in appropriate cases.

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