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ON REQUIREMENTS OF BUSINESS INTERPRETERS IN LIGHT OF THE INTERPRETIVE
THEORY OF TRANSLATION

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ABSTRACT

In the light of interpretive theory of translation, the purpose of this paper is to discuss job competence for business interpreters by analyzing the essence of business interpreting and the application of interpretive theory of translation in business interpreting. Besides proficient linguistic knowledge, business interpreters are required to reserve and enrich their extra-linguistic knowledge and improve their quality in many aspects. With the combination of theory and practice, business interpreters can eliminate communication barriers in order to promote the success of commercial activity and make a contribution to local economic development as a coordinator.

Key Words : interpretive theory; business interpreting; job competence

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1. INTRODUCTION TO INTERPRETIVE THEORY

Interpretive theory of Paris school appeared in the 1960s, which became the dominant theory in interpretation industry because of its systematicness and innovativeness. It has a far-reaching influence on interpreting research all over the world. Interpretive theory was raised by "Paris school" represented by Seleskovitch and Lederer in the early 1970s. In 1984, the publication of *Interpreting Theory Practice and Teaching* co-authored by Seleskovitch and Lederer marked the formal established of interpretive theory [1]. In 1994, *Interpreting and Translation Theory of Interpretive School* written by Lederer marked the maturity and perfection of interpretive theory[2].

Interpretational school of Paris thinks that interpretation is the process of original language understanding which breaks away from language shell and target language expression. Translation is not a single decoding process from original language to target language, but a dynamic process of re-understanding and re-expressing the ideas of the original language[3]. According to interpretive theory, three stages will be gone through before interpreters translate from original language speaker's meaning to another language that audience can understand: understanding, breaking away from original language shell and expression. "Breaking away from original language shell" is the unique insight of interpretive theory.

Understanding. In the triangle interpretation mode of interpretive theory, understanding is a very important step, which is the foundation of the next stage. In the process of understanding, interpreters acquire meaning by combining language factors and encyclopedic knowledge. The meaning is not simple superposition of words and sentences, but combination of language meaning and all kinds of knowledge.

Breaking away from original language shell. Speaking is fleeting, so what the audience can remember is the overall content of spoken language rather than every specific word. According to interpretive theory, when talk ends, its sound elements will gradually disappear and what are stored in interpreter's mind is non-language form. The reason that interpreters can remember the various nuances of meaning is that they start using a basic ability, that is, remember the understood content before disappearance of words and break away from original language form. Interpretive school calls this process breaking away from original language shell. This process is a cognitive process.

Expression. This is the last step in interpretation. After knowing the information original language wants to express, interpreters should express the content of original language in the target language according to his understanding. Although interpreters can be free from all bondage of the external form of original language, it does not mean that they can totally ignore the form and content of original language. On the one hand, interpreters should make their interpretation faithful to the content of original language. On the other hand, they should make their interpretation faithful to the form of original language as much as possible.

2.The Essence of Business Interpretation

As a branch of interpretation, business interpretation is the same as other interpretation which are cross – linguistic, cross-border and cross-cultural communicative activity. Apart from commonness of interpreting, business interpretation has its own characteristics. It is not only the process of language transformation but also the process of business parties' mutual communication and understanding to carry out international communication and cooperation under business environment. Before business interpretation activities, interpreters not only have solid language fundamentals but also have enough business knowledge.

Business interpretation involves not only a lot of jargon and names in terms of vocabulary but also many different industries and fields, such as economy, trade, financial accounting, law, trademark and advertising, etc. Therefore, business interpreter not simply produce an equivalent discourse but provide communication services suitable for professional requirements for service objects.

3. The Application of Interpretive Theory in Business Interpretation

(1) Understanding

According to interpretive theory, what interpreters should translate is the meaning not the form of original language. In business English, some sentences seem very easy, but the meaning and the literal meaning are totally different. If interpreters translate the literal meaning simply, service objects don't understand. Therefore, interpreters must understand the essence of business dialogue, then break away from original language shell and express it in target language, so service objects can get the correct information. For example, the corresponding Chinese of offer is "quotation", but best offer cannot be translated as "最好的报价". If buyers say, "Here's my inquiry list. I hope you will difference me your best offer." This buy means that they want to clinch a deal with a lower price, so the correct translation of this sentence should be:这是我的询价单, 希望贵公司能给予我方最优惠的报价.

(2) Breaking away from Original Language Shell

This phase refers to forgetting the form of original language immediately in order to memorize the content the speaker wants to express. For example, in business interpretation, interpreters usually encounter business negotiation between two sides. Under this circumstance, due to the difference of two sides' culture, knowledge level and expression habit, people will express the same meaning in different ways. Some express it complicatedly while some express it simply. After listening to their talk, interpreters should jump out of the original language form quickly and remember the expressed real meaning.

(3) Expression

According to interpretive theory, the third stage is expression, which also is the key link. Interpreters must use proper correct target language to translate the meaning of original language. The expression of meaning is the syncretic result of language meaning and cognitive knowledge. Thus higher requirements are needed for business interpreters.

4. Requirements of Business Interpreters in light of the Interpretive Theory

4.1 Language Knowledge

(1) Solid Language Knowledge

As an interpreter, solid language basic skills are indispensable. Business interpreters are not exceptional, such as basic vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and intonation, context, and so on, which can guarantee the basic accuracy. This is what the first stage of interpretation—understanding needs. As for the usually used basic economic terms in business interpretation like L/C (letter of credit), D/P (documents against payment), T/T (telegraphic transfer), these trade terms are language knowledge that business interpreters must grasp well. Business interpretation often involves complex but key number translation, which requires interpreters to master all the number unit and digital expression. In addition, the master of fixed words and expressions in interpretation can reduce the energy burden to some extent that can make interpreters have more energy to deal with new information [4]. For the language knowledge, interpreters should learn at any time and try to be a solid, skilled foreign language learner. Business scope of international trade covers many fields such as trade, finance, management, marketing. It's impossible and unnecessary for business interpreters to become experts who are proficient in all areas, but they must be familiar with the basic knowledge, concepts and terminology in various fields of business.

(2) The Power of Language Expression

In 1998, Professor Jun Xu interviewed Seleskovitch, she explained, "in our study, we have our own priorities and characteristics. We investigated translation as communicative act rather than communicative result. Translation is first and foremost human communicative behavior. In natural communicative activities, language mainly acts as a tool, so we emphasized that the object of translation should be the information content, meaning, rather than language" [5]. Interpretive school think that translation should be faithful to original language, not in terms of language form but in terms of meaning. That is to say, the nature of target language expression is not the form of original language, but the meaning produced by the interaction between key points expressed by original language and learners' cognitive significance [6].

Being faithful to original language does not mean that interpreters do not have translation freedom. Interpretive theory thinks that the freedom for an interpreter is his or her expression. As long as the meaning of translation version is faithful to original language, different ways of expression are acceptable. On this basis, if possible, translation version must be natural, conforming to language habits and seeking expression similarity between source language and target language. Different translation needs different ways to express, so interpreters should choose the most appropriate expression method according to the actual need in order to make translation version achieve similar rhetoric and aesthetic effect.

Meaning equivalence exists between chapters, rather than between words and sentences, so an interpreter cannot really understand the meaning of source language only after he or she finishes listening to the whole passage. So, meaning unit rather than a word or a sentence should be regarded as translation unit.

4.2 Extralinguistic Knowledge

Extralinguistic Knowledge is special requirements for business interpreters, which can improve interpreters' attention and memory, affecting interpreters' reasoning of received information in order to speed interpreters' information processing. Interpretive theory created by Paris Advanced Translation School thinks that what interpreters need to express is not the meaning of language symbols, but extra linguistic meaning expressed by speakers in the discourse [7]. When interpretive theory is applied to business interpretation, interpreters should think about the characteristics of business negotiation, that is to say, in addition to language itself, interpreters should have special knowledge reserve, which is key to the success of business negotiation. Just as those persons who have rich experience can easily understand and analyze all kinds of problems in life, interpreters equipped with a lot of business knowledge reserve can also deal with all kinds of business negotiations. Therefore, a good business interpreter must have ability to receive knowledge anytime and anywhere. He should not only have fast learning ability but also have the spirit of loving learning.

(1) Pre-stored Extra linguistic Knowledge

To a large extent, the success of business interpretation depends on the degree of interpreters' familiarity of background information. With the prosperity and development of international business, a large number of business vocabulary has been established and recognized around the world. For example, in terms of export and import, relevant terms and clauses are a must to grasp, including intellectual property, anti-dumping measures, value-added tax, anti-dumping duty, trade barrier and such rules Chinese government has formulated and often mentioned as no discount for the export of semi-finished product. In the aspect of the management behavior of enterprise, a lot of extra-linguistic knowledge need to be stored such as enterprise organizations, the balanced scorecard (BSC), Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), plan - do - check - action (PDCA).

As for these above mentioned knowledge, business interpreters must consciously accumulate and store them as long-term memory in their encyclopedic knowledge. That is what Gile calls "pre-stored knowledge". As for the importance of these pre-stored knowledge, Gile thinks that the more relevant knowledge a man knows, the more chances he can understand correctly the sender's information.

(2) The Acquisition of Extra linguistic knowledge during the process of interpretation

An interpreter's preparation of business knowledge can't be complete. On the one hand, it is due to the limited preparation time. On the other hand, interpreters themselves are not insiders. If he or she can prepare very well for some terminology and background information, this interpreter only knows bilingual equivalent version of relevant terminology on shallow language level. He or she can't completely understand exactly what it refers to or what kind of related process. In addition, without a complete all-round pre-communication beforehand, the interpreter can't completely understand two sides' point and foothold, but it is impossible to carry out in reality. Therefore, when interpreting, the interpreter is not only doing interpreting but also learning, by understanding the speaker's language and put it in the target language, which can double deepening his understanding. According to interpretive theory, the first phase is understanding. Gile also believes that only after fully understanding the speaker's information, can the interpreter ensure to choose the most appropriate word and structure to express it. The basic principle is that the interpreter cannot translate what he or she doesn't understand. The saying is too absolute, but it is not unreasonable. It is an indisputable fact that interpreters cannot do automatic translation word for word, especially in high-tech business meeting. That is why interpreters should do preparation as much as possible. This kind of preparation work will last until the beginning of the meeting, or even extend to the meeting itself. Sometimes the continuation phase is even more important than preparation stage.

Through previous preparation, the interpreter only understands the terminology and equivalence of another language, but it is difficult to have a deep understanding of the internal operation mechanism, which is a necessity in interpretation. Therefore, by listening to and understanding the speaker's reasoning route, the interpreter should make full use of the opportunity of live interpretation to understand the basic principles above superficial language level.

In business, different companies, research institutes, and even different employees in the same company may call the same business process, technology or equipment different names. Sometimes, some of the jargon are only to be used in a particular business or company. In this case, if the interpreter still interpret according to his previous stored encyclopedia knowledge or information collected from the internet, the listener may not know what the speaker really means. The interpreter can be familiar with such kind of terminology only through interpreting process. The interpreter can give full play to their own subjective initiative, identify the Sino-British equivalent words and make the negotiation proceed smoothly.

Anyhow, at the scene of interpretation, by focusing on the speaker, creatively weaving new acquired knowledge in short term memory and storing them in long-term memory of encyclopedic knowledge, the interpreter deepens his understanding of some terminology, accumulates new terms and corrects the previous wrong understanding rather than machine translation. This is why the machine cannot replace man to translate. According to Lederer, the reason that machines cannot completely replace human translation is that machines are not equipped with human being's cognitive ability and structure [2].

4.3 Basic Quality

Interpretive theory thinks there are three stages for translation: understanding, breaking away from source language shell and re-expression. This not only provides basic requirements for interpreters' role in interpretation but also have requirements for interpreters' quality. They are as follows.

(1) Cross-cultural Awareness

According to interpretive theory, from understanding the source language to breaking away from source language shell and reexpressing them in target language, the interpreter has become a bilingual "half expert". But this is not enough, in order to really understand source language and the meaning of the speaker, the interpreter also needs "dual culture", that is, cross-cultural consciousness. Mr. Zuoliang Wang once said, "What the translator deals with are individual words, but they're faced with two different cultures. A good translator must be a real cultural person." [9] As for real successful interpretation, dual culture is even more important than bilingual, because language is the carrier of culture and language is meaningful only in the culture. In order to cultivate interpreters' cross-cultural awareness, dictionary and encyclopedia is very important source, but they can never replace cultural environment. This is why most of the interpreters training program requires the interpreter to experience in native language country for at least six months or a year. Only in this way, the interpreter can truly understand the meaning of the word or phrase in a particular culture and can truly achieve understanding. An interpreter assumes the role of the coordinator. According to the different culture, an interpreter decides which can be directly translated and which needs fuzzy processing in order to avoid unnecessary conflicts caused by cultural differences.

(2) Awareness of Career Preparation

A successful interpreter is usually agile, intelligent, good at overcoming nervousness and can stay calm, firm and persistent in various occasions. Only in this way can the interpreter memorize and store information meaning which has broken away from the form of source language, which is the second phase of translation according to interpretive theory, forget the structure of language symbols and only memorize the expressed content. For an interpreter, it is important to deal with various aspects of pressure from senior officials or the presence of interpreting masters. Good performance of live interpretation must be achieved by accumulation of many years of study and practice and interpreters must always be ready to study or train themselves. In addition, in order to become a qualified business interpreter, he not only becomes an expert in language and business but also have a good knowledge of other fields.

(3) The Consciousness of Re-expression

Interpretive theory thinks the freedom for an interpreter mainly exists in re-expression, that is, he can express it in the way which he thinks proper after his understanding [10]. Although freedom exists, it doesn't mean that interpreters can iterate casually or replace the speaker' ideas with their own.

5 Conclusion

This article studied the requirements for business interpreters in light of interpretive theory. Business interpretation is not only the process of language transformation but also the process of promoting business sides' understanding and communication and developing international trade. Business interpreter plays an important role in the process. In order to promote the effective communication of both sides, the interpreter should not only possess solid language fundamentals but also prepare related extra linguistic knowledge and improve their qualities in many aspects.

With the combination of theory and practice, they can eliminate communication barriers, play the role of coordinator and ultimately promote the success of business activities.

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