Four-Corner Model: A New Application of The Interpretive Theory in English-Chinese Written Translation

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Abstract: Slow translation speed and the difficulty of translating long and complex sentences are the problems that translators often face in the practice of English-Chinese written translation. By analyzing the process of rapid interpretation by interpreters, which is often considered to be guided by the Interpretive Theory, this article attempts to obtain suitable methods from the interpreting process to improve the speed and quality of written translation. This paper constructs a "four-corner model" for English-Chinese written translation after the discussion of the Interpretive Theory, especially its "triangular model of interpretation". Through some training, the "four-corner model" can effectively improve the speed and quality of English-Chinese written translation.

Keywords: The Interpretive Theory; Interpretation; Triangular model of interpretation; Written translation; A "four-corner model" for translation

Since translation was professionally divided into oral interpretation and written translation, the theories of the two seem to have developed in different ways. Some researchers believe that translation is essentially the same, so they studied the process of translation as a whole and didn't distinguish oral interpretation from written translation when discussing translation methods. Some researchers have developed specialized interpretation theories according to their own practice, such as Danica Seleskovitch and Marianne Lederer. However, few researchers have applied specific interpretation theories to the study of translation. The author of this article has asked interpreters for quick translation methods, so she turns her attention to the Interpretive Theory when solving some problems in the process of written translation.

This article begins with a discussion of some key points of the Interpretive Theory, including its summary of the essence of translation and of the process of interpretation, the "triangular model of interpretation". Based on this, the author puts forward some enlightenment from the Interpretive Theory for the translation process (mainly Chinese-English translation). Then the article constructs a model suitable for the translation process, namely the "four-corner model". Finally, some examples of the application of the "four-corners model" in dealing with specific problems of translation are given.

1. The Interpretive Theory

Different from the dominant School of Functional Linguistics at that time, Seleskovitch chose interpretation process as the object of her observation and research. She proposed a strict distinction between language and meaning, and focused her research on demonstrating the generation of meaning between two languages, that is, the generation of meaning after understanding the source language. When re-expressing in the target language, the sentences or expression we choose is still based on meaning rather than the form of source language.

1.1 Nature and Purpose of Translation

Translation is a communicative behavior and its purpose is to convey communicative meaning.

The kernel of Interpretive Theory is the distinction between linguistic meaning and non-verbal sense. What the translator wants to convey is not the meaning of linguistic signs, but the non-verbal sense expressed by the speaker in his speech. That is to say, the essence of meaning is the "sense" conveyed by communicators through language symbols, rather than the meaning of language symbols themselves (Danica Seleskovitch & Marianne Lederer, 1984).

Interpretive theory holds that what a translator or interpreter wants to translate is not language symbols, but the meaning that the language symbols want to express. That is to say, the essence of translation is the exchange and transformation of meaning, which is the same both in the process of interpretation and translation. This is the basis on which an interpretation theory can be used to study the written translation process.

In fact, in the early period, the Interpretive Theory focused on the study of interpretation, especially the process of conference simultaneous interpretation. However, with the deepening of the research, the researchers themselves have extended the scope of application of their theory to various forms of meaning translation, including written translation and sign language translation.

1.2 Deverbalization

Anyone can observe the evanescence of oral statements. Interpreters remember the bulk of what is said but forget almost all the actual words used to say it. This fact is patently obvious during a speech: the signs of the discourse disappear with the sound of the voice but the addressees – and the interpreter – keep a deverbalized memory, an awareness, of the ideas or facts evoked (Marianne Lederer, 1994).

Deverbalization, then, is a cognitive process: as the signs of a discourse disappear, sensorial data, that is to say, the meaning conveyed by the discourse, become bits of knowledge divested of their concrete shape. The victory of interpreters over the evanescence of words has allowed the close study of an important phenomenon of language behaviour: deverbalized sense is transmitted from speakers to listeners, it arises out of words but is not to be confused with them (Marianne Lederer, 1994).

The Interpretive Theory holds that each language is an external form, and what translators or interpreters try to translate is the meaning contained in this "language shell". The interpreter needs to grasp the meaning expressed by the speaker within a short time after hearing the content of the sentence, so it is less affected by the form of language. The translator understands and translates the meaning while looking at the source text, and the source text does not "disappear", so the linguistic form of the source language will continuously and intuitively affect the translator's obtaining of the meaning of the original text.

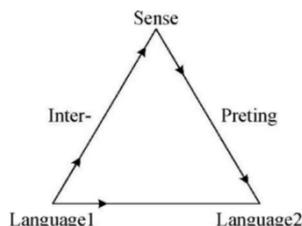## 1.3 The process of oral interpretation: the triangular model

The theory of the Interpretive school attaches great importance to the study of the translation process. According to the theory, in interpreting, the interpreter actually has to go through three stages before transforming the speaker's words into words that can be understood by the audience in another language:

Step1:Listen clearly to the language symbols used to express the content of thought. Through analysis and understanding, the language phenomenon expressed by these symbols is clarified. Find out what the symbols are saying. This stage is called "interpretation or exgesis of discourse" (Heping Liu, 2011).

Step2: Immediately and consciously forget the structure of these language signs in order to remember only the content of the thought expressed, that is, the cognitive and emotional meaning produced by the language signs. This stage is known as deverbalization.

Step3: Make new sentences with symbols in another language, and make these sentences conform to the following two requirements: first, they should express the whole content of the original sentences, and second, they should be easy to understand (Lederer, 2003). This stage is the "reformulation" of primitive information content.

These three steps of interpretation can be formulated in this triangular flow chart blow:

2. Some Enlightenment on the Interpretive Theory

After discussing the core points of the Interpretive Theory, the author puts forward some enlightenment which are applicable to written translation practice. In general, each language has its own specific form, or "shell", which plays a slightly different role in the interpretation and translation process.

2.1 Different Characteristics of Chinese and English: Different Shell

The basis of good translation undoubtedly lies in understanding the linguistic characteristics of the source language and the target language. And Chinese and English, two languages derived from two different cultural, share so many differences in various aspects.

The syntactic characteristics of English and other European languages are very much in line with the Western way of thinking, which focuses on logic and reason. Rationalism emphasizes logical reasoning and pays attention to formal argumentation, which is manifested in English, that is, paying attention to the disclosure of form, rigor in the formation of structure and complete form. English sentences, whose grammar is dominant, adhere to the formal structure and pay great attention to form to express meaning, mainly hypo-tactic. Hypotaxis uses the change of form and the logic-grammatical connectors to rigorously expresses the meaning of the speaker (Shuneng Lian, 2010).

In sharp contrast, Chinese sentences seldom use or even do not use formal connection means, and pay attention to implicit coherence. Chinese,which pays attention to time and order of things as well as its function and meaning, is parataxis. There is no formal grammatical distinction in Chinese, and all useless appendages are discarded, so that sentences correspond closely to the order of thought (Meskill, John,1973).

These two distinct linguistic characteristics of Chinese and English are exactly the difficulties for translators to deal with Chinese-English translation. Unfamiliarity with one of these two "shells" often leads translators to either spend too much time organizing the target language or to output an insufficiently native target language.

2.2 Deverbalization Differs in Chinese and English

The factor of language "shell", or deverbalization, plays a different role in the process of interpretation and translation. Perhaps the biggest difference is the immediacy of oral interpretation.
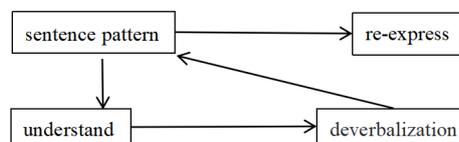
The distinguishing feature of interpretation from translation is the immediacy of its work. That is to say, the interpreter will interpret the target language in spoken form at the moment the speaker has just finished speaking. It also involves many cognitive procedures, neural processing, listening comprehension of source language, acquisition and memory of meaning, translation and expression of target language, etc (Weihua Lai, 2012). The process sounds complicated, but at least in terms of deverbalization, interpretation is easier than translation-- because the language shell "disappears" the moment the speaker finishes speaking, leaving only the sense information captured by the interpreter.

It is relatively difficult for the translator to finish deverbalization, because the form of translation determines that the shell of the source language is always in front of the translator, which not only affects the translator's obtaining of the source text's meaning, but also restricts the translator's process of expressing the meaning of the source language into the target language.

3. Four-corner model: Process of Written Translation Based on the Interpretive Theory

The key to solving the difficulty of understanding and re-expressing source language information in written translation is to realize rapid expression by strengthening the linguistic shell of the source language and the target language respectively, which is precisely the idea provided by the Interpretive Theory. Combined with the "triangle model" of the Interpretive Theory, the author analyzes and proposes a similar "four-corner model of translation", which can realize the rapid translation of complex sentences or clauses in translation by summarizing the shell of the target language (in this case, Chinese) into some formulaic formulations.

Similar to the "interpretation triangle model", the "written translation four-corners model" can be summarized as the following:

To translate long sentences in an oral interpretation way, it is necessary to understand the original sentence in combination with the sentence pattern, and then quickly break away from the shell of the original language, and use the 2 or 3 simple sentences to re-express the original sentence. The most important point here is to understand the original sentence structure - and then leave the source language shell -

and re-express it in multiple simple sentences. Never pend too much time agonizing over which sentence structure to rephrase it in, just use multiple simple sentences.

Here takes the case of attributive clauses as an example:

The biggest reductions are in the area at the back of the cortex where information from the retina is processed and interpreted, and in the "default-mode" network, a piece of neural circuitry distributed between three different cortical areas, which is associated with daydreaming, mind-wandering and thinking about the self and others.

The reason why translators find long sentences difficult to translate is that they stick too closely to the original form. When we translate this sentence in an oral interpretive way, things may become easier. The first step is to fully comprehension the sentence combined with the original sentence pattern: ① biggest reductions...at the back of the cortex ② the back of the cortex...information from retina....processed and interpreted here. After we get the meaning, translation marched on to second step, that is to focus on the meaning and leave out the sentence pattern. Then step three, go to the new Chinese sentence pattern, never spend too much time thinking in what the order those meanings will be re-expressed, just apart the original attributive clause into two simple sentences. Do not waste time in gathering up your sentence like: The most atrophied area is the area located in the posterior part of the cerebral cortex that processes and reads information from the retina. Finally, step four, re-express your target language sentence out:

The most atrophy is in the posterior part of the cerebral cortex, which processes and reads information from the retina, and in the "default mode" network, a section of neural circuits in three different areas of the cerebral cortex that are associated with daydreaming, wandering, and thinking about self and others.

This approach can not be used in the long-term plan of improving the translator's bilingual ability, but it is quite suitable for dealing with time-limited tasks such as exams.

Analyze the fixed sentence patterns applicable to different English clauses when translating into Chinese, summarize a set of effective Chinese "language shell", and then in translation practice, use the "translation four-corners model" to quickly translate and transform can greatly increase the speed and effectively improve the efficiency of translation. Although the "translation four-corners model" does not seem to be a way to improve translation ability, through long-term practice, translators will have a better understanding of bilingualism, and ultimately improve their translation ability.

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