

The Feasibility Study of Interpretive Theories in the College English Course—Exemplified with Qingdao University of Science and Technology

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Abstract—The current College English Course has to face many difficulties, such as the low efficiency and the student's reluctance to learn, many universities have attempted to reform it, and some effects begin to show. The author is trying to analyze the feasibility to recommend the interpretive training methods into College English Class from the following three aspects: the need of college English reform, the learning desire of non-English major undergraduates and the demand of CET 4 and CET 6.

Index Terms—college English course, interpretive training methods, feasibility

I. INTRODUCTION OF INTERPRETIVE THEORY

A. *The General Introduction of Interpretive Theory*

The interpretive theory or the interpretive approach which came into being in the late 1960s in France is a school specialized in interpreting and non-literary translation. It was first put forward by Seleskovitch (1984), French translation theorist, who holds that translation, in every deep sense, is interpretation, which means the translator's interpretation on the original text based on the language symbols and his own cognitive complements. The translator's ultimate purpose is not the equivalence on the language unit, but on the meaning or effects of the source text, which poses great differences with the opinions of linguistic schools, such as that of George Moutin. This theory derives directly from the interpreting practice, presenting great influence on the translation study. Based on the research results of neurolinguistics, experimental psychology, Piaget's genetic psychology and linguistic, the study group had a through research on the real-time interpreting practice and combined non-literary translation study, thus formed the whole series of interpretive theory. Since the 1980s, the interpretive theory has achieved great on the field not only of interpreting but of the written texts, scientific translation and translation teaching.

1. Levels of Translation

The common translation theory holds that translation should be conducted on the three levels, that is, lexical, syntactic and discourse levels. Whereas the interpretive theory argues that the first two are linguistic translation, and only the discourse translation is the real translation. A well-done translation should be the discourse interpretation, for the reason that a sentence is the basic unit of grammar while discourse is the basic element of the meaning. The real translation is the meaning interpretation but not the grammar or a single word or sentence. The equivalence between the source text and the target text is the overall equivalence on communicative meanings. And the readers or the listeners of the target language can get the same feeling with those of the source language. From this perspective the basic translation unit should be the communicative meaning but not words or sentences.

2. Objects of Translation

The essence of interpretive theory is the distinction between the linguistic meaning and the non-verbal sense. An interpreter is to interpret the non-verbal sense of the speaker but not the linguistic meaning of the language. That is to say, the nature of meaning is implicitness or the real intention of the speaker but not the linguistic meaning of the language symbols. Meaning or sense is composed of two parts. One is implicitness which refers to the interior sense of the speaker. The other is the explicitness which is the actual contents of the speaker. And translation and interpretation are communicative behavior substantially. So the purpose of translation or interpretation is to convey meanings or communicative senses.

Above all, the translation object is the conveyance of communicative meanings. A translator or an interpreter is to convey the information of the whole discourse, but not the discourse itself. Thus interpretation is not the memorization of the speaker's words of the source language, but the grasp of the communicative meaning and reconstruction of that with the target language.

3. Communicative Meanings

The communicative meaning depends on the sufficient common knowledge among participants. An interpreter is to obtain communicative senses by recalling the cognitive baggage in his mind at a cluster of sounds. Five essential elements are linguistic knowledge, cognitive baggage, the cognitive context, the speaker and the audience. An interpreter should possess solid linguistic knowledge, in that case, his attention can be focused on the contents during

the listening but not the language itself. Cognitive baggage is extra-linguistic knowledge which refers to the knowledge about the actual world. Communicative meaning is the product of the combination of the linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge. Cognitive contexts are the direct and concrete knowledge derived from the source material. Cognitive baggage and cognitive context together form the cognitive complements, which is of great importance with the linguistic knowledge to get the communicative meaning. The speaker is an important part for the status, and an interpreter should translate on the speaker's shoes to avoid possible mistakes. Last, the audience's reaction is badly concerned by the speaker, so it should also be the attention of the interpreter to produce an efficient communicative meaning. In this process, the eloquence, the intonation, body language, and even facial expressions of the interpreter should be involved to achieve the speaker's expectation on the reaction of the audience.

4. Stages of Translation

The interpretive theory claims that the process of interpretation falls into three stages. Phase one, interpretation of discourse, is a critical phase for it's the most important connection between the speaker and the audience. The oral form of the speaker's utterance will disappear immediately. Meanwhile it becomes the interpreter's understanding through the process of discourse interpretation. Phase two, de-verbalization. In this stage, the interpreter will ignore the linguistic symbols consciously and only commit the communicative meaning into memory. Phase three, reformulation of the target language. In this process, the interpreter reproduces the material in the target language completely. And the interpretation should be easy to understand.

In all, the interpretive theory assumes the concept that translation is not a liner procedure from one language to the other, but a triangle process containing "the understanding of the source language, de-verbalization and the expression of the target language". Different from other translation theories, the interpretive theory first presents the idea of "de-verbalization". And the goal of translator is supposed to convey the meaning and contents but not the form or the language itself.

B. *The Introduction and Development of Interpretive Theory in China*

The study of interpreting in western countries has lasted for more than fifty years, while that of China has been condensed into over a decade. Short as it is, Chinese scholar's commitments and contributions can not be ignored. And the interpretive theory has a profound and far-reaching influence on Chinese translation scholars. The introduction and development of interpretive theory in China mainly include three ways: translation of books on the interpretive theory, scholars' study at ESIT in France and combined further research on interpretive theory by Chinese scholars.

Sun Huishuang, honored by French government as the Chevalier of the Order of Arts, was the first person who introduced the interpretive theory by translating *Interpretive Skills* of Danica Seleskovitch to China in 1979. In 1990, *the Interpretive Theory and Teaching Practice* co-authored by Danica Seleskovitch and Marianne Lederer was translated by Wang Jiarong and Shi Meizhen. In 1998, Liu Heping wrote a chapter in Xu Jun's book *Modern French Translation Theories* to introduce interpretive theory. She does not only wrote articles about the basic views, technical terms, translation process, translation assessment and the practical application of the interpretive theory to China, but also first put forward the Chinese translation edition of the interpretive theory into "Shiyi School".

Besides the translation of the original books on the interpretive theory, many Chinese scholars went to ESIT to learn directly from Seleskovitch to broaden their research. The representatives are Liu Heping, Bao Gang and Cai Xiaohong.

Introducing Interpreting Studies by Bao Gang is the first book specializing in the study of "de-verbalization" and translation stages from the perspective of psycholinguistics, psychology, information theory and neurolinguistics. He tries to explore the nature of the understanding of the source language, the process of thinking, the target language expression and oral features of interpretation. And he attempts to analyze the internal mechanism among these phenomena.

Professor Liu Heping promotes not only the introduction and publication of interpretive theories but also the study of utilization of this theory. Based on the framework of the theory, she combined with the specific translation teaching practice and widened the theoretical framework and application mood in. Specific didactics and guidelines are given in her masterpiece *Interpreting Skills----Approaches to Teaching Interpretation*. She has creatively put forward the following points: students should grasp at least two languages before starting the interpretive courses; interpretive teaching should focus of interpretive skills with no linguistic problems; professional training is preferred than majoring students.

Cai Xiaohong specializes in empirical research on the translation process and translation assessment in her doctorate dissertation. She proposes three theoretical modes on the way of thinking in consecutive translation with the perspective of interdisciplinary research. In the research, she monitors the mental representation (such as information, time variable, language and strategies) as the variable parameters to conclude the general psychological law of language behaviors in consecutive translation, the nature of interpretation and major causes which have great impact on the interpretation performance. Besides, on translation assessment, information unit was proposed on the basis of interpretive theory, Schema Theory of psycholinguistics, and discourse analysis theory. The unit was to be discussed and proved to be an objective, easy to use, and effective evaluation method.

Chinese scholars have made great contributions to the prevalence and refining of interpretive theory. Their study constitutes an important part of the interpretive theory. And in the last more than 30 years Chinese scholars have paid more emphasis on the empirical research, interdisciplinary study and translation stages and on some other points, but

the application of this theory in the College English Course is rarely found, so this essay is devoted to proving the feasibility of the application about the theory in the College English Course.

C. *The Causes of the Introduction and Development of the Interpretive Theory*

The causes of the prevalence of the interpretive theory in China can be listed as follows. First, the teaching practice and theoretical research of interpreting has always been the focus for Chinese scholars, while the interpretive theory appears as a good theoretical guidance and an easy tool. Second, a team of returning students from ESIT in France, including Liu Heping, Bao Gang and Cai Xiaohong, have completed their own monographs about the interpretive theory, which rewrites the China's history of no monographs on interpretation. Third, a national interpretive seminar has been held for the ninth time every other year since 1996, which offers a valuable chance for Chinese researchers to learn and exchange, and effectively promotes the development of the interpretive theory in China. Danica Seleskovitch and Marianne Lederer, founders of the interpretive theory have attended the seminar several times, presenting their concern for the further development of the theory in China.

D. *The Influence of Interpretive Theory*

All together five monographs on the interpretive theory has been published in China, which almost include all the relative aspects of the theory. The phenomenon to translate the western translation theory extensively is rarely found at home, showing the great importance of the theory. Actually the interpretive theory has positive influence on the interpreting and practical writing translation. It points out explicitly what to translate to an interpreter or a translator. A translator should make sure about the contents of the source material or the speaker to get the communicative meaning. This is quite different with Newmark's opinion that "my translation is meaningful in linguistics". (Newmark, 1988:155)

II. THE FEASIBILITY STUDY

A. *To Meet the Needs of College English Reform*

Ministry of Education in China officially issued College English Curriculum Requirements in September, 2007, which explicitly demonstrates that the ultimate goal of College English Course is to cultivate students' comprehensive capacity, listening and speaking in particular, making them efficient in communication in their future study, work and social contacts. Meanwhile students' independent learning ability and overall cultural awareness should be enhanced to cater to the needs of our opened society as well as international communication. Therefore, the former "exam-oriented" educational system must be impacted.

The Curriculum Requirements also indicates that the university can work out their own curriculum according to the ultimate goal, ensuring students at different levels can improve their language capacity. So universities through out the country have probed into different methods to reform College English Course. As a result, Module Teaching Method, Hierarchical Teaching and Selective English Courses are proposed. The most distinguished one is "the Construction of College English Personalized Teaching Mode under the Network Environment" by Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics. That is, personalized teaching and evaluation system are given with the help of the internet platform.

Qingdao University of Science and Technology has also made its reform attempt. Four terms teaching mode has been shortened to three terms since 2010, which means students should attend CET 4 at the end of the third term. Then selected courses would be offered at the fourth term. In addition, speaking course is specially fixed every other week. These measures have achieved results to some degree with the purpose of broadening students' horizons, arousing interests and improving their speaking ability. Yet, during these 48 speaking hours, teachers always have great difficulty in finding appropriate topics to proceed. So students speaking ability can not be fully promoted. In this sense, the reform should be necessarily conducted not only in form but also in teaching contents.

The following is a questionnaire about satisfaction on College English Course. Participants are 400 freshmen and sophomores from the major of engineering, law, advertisement, business and management, and fashion designing. 366 questionnaires are valid.

TABLE 1

terms option	CLASS SATISFACTION ON COLLEGE ENGLISH COURSE							
	A	%	B	%	C	%	D	%
1. overall opinion on College English Course	Like very much	24.9	Not bad	56.3	No idea	14.5	Dislike	4.3
2. the ultimate purpose	To cultivate the speaking and listening capacity	65.3	To pass CET 4 and CET 6	24.9	To accomplish teaching plan	7.1	No idea.	2.7
3. intensive reading class	Very interesting, I love to take it.	11.7	It's necessary to lay a profound language basis.	35.3	Not bad. But I'm a bit passive.	31.4	No idea.	21.6
4. speaking class	The atmosphere is lovely, and I'd like to attend it.	18	It's necessary to improve my speaking ability.	41.8	Not bad, but there is no enough chances to practice	26.2	I'm passive so I don't like it.	14
5. listening class	It's rich in contents, so I like it.	18.6	Some skills can be offered.	39.6	It's dull, and I'm tired.	19.1	I can't catch and don't like it.	22.7

From the above table, we can find, most students have got to a consensus about the ultimate purpose of College English Course. 65.3% of the questioned students hold the idea that the speaking and listening capacity should be improved in College English Class, and show an overall agreement to the current English class. However, they show a rather low reference the present intensive reading class, only 11.7% show great interest in attending it, while 31.4% of the students display reluctance to it. That proves intensive class are in urgent need to be reformed. Furthermore, a large portion of students have to attend the listening and speaking class out of its necessity but not passion. In this case, the best learning results can be hardly achieved.

Interpretive training methods should be introduced here because the characteristic of interpretive training happens to coincide with the teaching goal of College English Course in many aspects, especially in the following three points.

1. Skill training is the main part of interpretive courses, which contains various skills training procedures. Students can practice their language skills comprehensively through the practice such as 3-min lecture. The practice needs recording to monitor speakers' fluency, accuracy, logic and rhythm. Long time repeated practice can fully promote students' speaking performance.

2. Cross-cultural awareness is another main point cultivated on interpretive class. While The Curriculum Requirements has clearly indicated that College English Course is not only a basic course to introduce language but an important quality-oriented one to broaden students' knowledge and get acquaintance with world culture. On this point, the two share the same opinion.

3. If interpretive training methods are introduced into College English Course, teachers can only show the basic interpretive theories and skills briefly and do basic demonstration. There will not be enough time for students to practice at class, so more practical training should be conducted by students after class, which will be of great help to develop students' independent learning ability. And this is also one of the ultimate goals of College English Curriculum Requirements as we mentioned above.

B. To Satisfy the Needs of Non-major College Students' Study

Many non-English major college students have acquired great capacity to fulfill the interpretive training as the following aspects indicate:

1. From the individual initiative the majority of college students are not satisfied with the learning only from the textbooks and the cramming method of teaching in the traditional intensive reading class. They have a strong aspiration to facilitate their oral and listening ability. However, they can not find the specific instructions of skills, practice and methods. So here interpretive training can come on the stage.

The next table is a questionnaire made by the same group of students on the students' attitude on interpretive training.

TABLE 2

terms	option	NON-ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE ON INTERPRETIVE TRAINING							
		A	%	B	%	C	%	D	%
1. Do you know about interpretive training	Yes, sure.		1.9	Not many.	39.6	Only heard, very little.	43.7	No, nothing.	14.8
2. Your idea on memory training	Like it very much.		12.0	Feel like trying.	72.6	No idea.	9.8	Burdensome, reject.	5.6
3. Your view on note-taking.	Like it very much.		20.5	Feel like trying.	59.8	No idea.	15	Burdensome, reject.	4.7
4. Your opinion on cultural difference.	Very interesting, eager to learn.		45.5	Sounds good. Can have a try	45.5	Feel indifferent.	6.6	No interest.	3.4
5. Your expected mode if given	Dual-degree program		14.2	Special training institute.	16.7	College English Course	46.7	Optional Course	22.4
6. Your viewpoint on self-centered learning	Willing to do that.		45.1	Can fulfill some practice.	31.7	A little is OK.	19.1	Burdensome. Reject.	4.6

From the above table, we can find the majority of students are interested in the contents of interpretive training even they don't know much about it. And 46.7% hopes that the training can be introduced in College English Course to really promote their listening and speaking ability. And about 45.1% of them are willing to practice after class independently, which all mean most students are eager to get more practical interpretive training in College English Class. One more prominent fact is that 90% of the participants show their great interest in cultural difference, and this can make a good point to bring in interpretive training.

2. Under the influence of quality-oriented education system many students learn English from their primary school. Therefore, the overall English capacity of students are rather high than ever before, especially their listening and speaking English.

3. Jean Herbert (2011), the renowned interpretive expert, once said, "A good interpreter should know everything of something and something of everything"(p.87). Professor Shukong Zhong (2006) also holds the idea that an interpreter should be an encyclopaedia. That is to say, a qualified interpreter should grasp not only the language itself but also different kinds of knowledge, especially the knowledge about his major. As a matter of fact, in the real translation practice the non-English major translator show more advantages than English major ones. Therefore, the mere master of language is far from enough and only the rich extra-linguistic knowledge can be the magic weapon for a competent interpreter.

4. More and more non-English major undergraduates have passed the examination on advanced interpretation and obtained certificate. So it's feasible to make interpretive training access to more college students.

C. To Facilitate CET 4 and CET 6

Currently the proportion of listening test accounts for 35% in CET 4 and CET 6, and it lasts 35 minutes, which constitute great difficulty for the examinees. So does the oral test after the examination. Besides, on the basis of *College English Curriculum Requirements*, a new reform on CET 4 and CET 6 will be conducted. That is, all the questions except the reading material are to be answered according to Part 1, the video material, which consequently proposes a high demand of students' listening ability. So students' English learning can be more effective if the basic techniques of interpretive training, such as note-taking, memory training, de-verbalization and cross-cultural awareness are introduced.

III. CONCLUSION

Based on the *College English Curriculum Requirements*, this essay illustrates the feasibility of interpretive training methods on the College English Course from the perspective of the current reform by Qingdao University of Science and Technology, the present learning situation of non-English major undergraduates, and a new round reform of CET 4 and CET 6. Combined with the characteristic of interpretive training, the new teaching mode on College English Course is sure to have a brilliant future.

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