

An Application of the Interpretive Theory to the Press Conference Interpreting

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Abstract—With opening and reform policies and its entrance into WTO, there are more and more political, economic and culture exchanges between China and the rest of the world. In recent years, the Chinese government holds international and regional press conferences of different kinds. Every March, the press conferences held by the Foreign Ministry during the National People's Congress (NPC) and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) draw more attention from the world. This does not only raise higher demand for interpreters, but also provides a new research field for interpreting studies. Thus, the subject of this thesis is official press conference interpretation (PCI). On one hand, interpreters are "bridge" for foreign journalists and speakers; on the other hand, the study on PCI is far from being enough. The Interpretive Theory was established on the basis of observation and analysis of interpreting reality. Its starting point and research perspective are completely different from that of the linguistics-based translation theories. In addition, the Interpretive Theory has its own explanation to "faithfulness". This paper, based on the Interpretive Theory, with the concept of "faithfulness" as its starting point, is to discuss and explore what "faithfulness" is, what criteria of "faithfulness" are and what methods the interpreters use in order to be faithful to the speakers at the press conferences during the NPC and the CPPCC sessions.

Index Term—press conference, interpreting, the Interpretive Theory

I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern world of information, all the countries are engaging themselves in the cooperation with other countries. In the increasingly larger Global Village, China has more and more exchanges with other countries. And these exchanges range from politics and economy to science and culture. China has witnessed her entry to the WTO, Beijing's successful host for the 2008 Olympics, the 2010 World Exposition in Shanghai and so on. With the advance of her comprehensive national strength and her international competitiveness, China, as one of the most promising developing countries, plays a more and more significant role in world affairs. The world needs to gain better knowledge of China.

Press conferences, as an important form of international communication, which can help keep a fine relationship with the media. Also, it is an effective means to strive for the objective report by the media and transmit information. Thus press conference serves as a bridge of information between China and the rest of world. (Lefevere & Bassnett, 2004). It is an important way for China to set up a good international image. China and the rest of the world can have a better understanding of each other through press conferences. Undoubtedly, a precondition of its success is the provision of language interpreting and competent interpreters. (Gile, 1991). And the Interpretive Theory was based on the observation and conclusion of conference interpreting practices. As a branch of conference interpreting, press conference interpreting can be properly directed by the Interpretive Theory.

The author also finds that the Interpretive Theory is usually used to deal with culture-loaded problems and realize faithfulness in interpreting. However, it is seldom applied to the interpreting of words and phrases at the press conference. Also, there is lack of evaluation of it from the perspective of the Interpretive Theory. The primary purpose of this thesis is to provide some coping strategies on how to interpret Chinese words and phrases into English more precise, so these coping strategies can be some of the guidance for interpreters in the interpreting field. (Williams & Chersternan, 2004). But this does not mean the research on coping strategies of words and phrases in the situation of the press conference will just stop here. Another purpose of this thesis is to draw more attention of other researchers to the further study.

II. ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF INTERPRETIVE THEORY

Interpretive Theory, also known as the sense-based theory, came into being with the publication of the doctoral dissertation of Danica Seleskovitch in 1968. With rich experience in conference interpreting, Seleskovitch is regarded as the pioneer of the Interpretive Theory. In 1984, Seleskovitch and Lederer co-authored the *Interpreter pour Traduire*, symbolizing the establishment of the Interpretive Theory. The 1980s was an important period for the Interpretive Theory with the constant appearance of research fruits. The researchers drew on the cognitive psychology, experimental psychology, and neuropsychological research results and established a whole set of interpreting theories, which makes the theory more scientific. The researchers also extended the Interpretive Theory to the written translation of non-literary and to the teaching of translation and interpreting. (James, 2008). The Interpretive Theory considered

interpreting as a communication, not simply a linguistic behavior. It contends that the nature of interpreting is to interpret the non-verbal sense of discourse instead of its linguistic meaning. The Interpretive Theory led the western interpreting research into a new stage and its fresh theoretical perspective made the interpreting studies take on a new look. Although four decades have passed since its birth, the Interpretive Theory still enjoys its popularity and significance in the interpreting studies.

A. *Main Contents of the Interpretive Theory*

Seleskovitch and Lederer argue that in a communication, people show great interest in the information the other party transmitted and the thought the other party expressed. (Phelan, 2008). Thus in the view of Seleskovitch, the interpreter is a drawer instead of a photographer because drawing is extracting the meaning and information which match the reality from the performance of the reality from the drawer's point of view rather than pursuing the mechanic equivalence of two languages.

The essence of the Interpretive Theory is as follows: what the interpreters try to understand and interpret is not the linguistic form of the source language, but the sense and idea the speakers want to convey, so the basic task for the interpreters is to de-verbalize, thus the meaning of the source language can be grasped. In Seleskovitch's opinion, the Interpretive Theory may be more proper to be called "communication and interpretive theory". (Franz, 1978). Because first of all, it is a theory for interpreting. It was built up based on the observance and analysis of live interpreting, which leads to its unique standing point and perspective from the normal translation theories of linguistic schools, because it discusses the sense conveyance of interpreting by regarding interpreting as communicative activities, in which language is not the only object to cope with, while to understand, memorize and judge in accordance with the cognition of both the source and target language and the communicative situation are more important. The Interpretive Theory holds that the goal of interpreters is to look for the functional equivalence for the target language speaker.

B. *The Triangular Model of the Interpretive Theory-process of Interpreting*

The research on the procedure of interpreting is of vital significance to the Interpretive Theory, to which the researchers of the Paris School led by Seleskovitch and Lederer, have contributed great efforts.

Before this, the procedure of interpreting is generally considered as composed of two phases-comprehension and reformulation. Through years of scientific research and empirical analysis, the Paris School introduced a phase of de-verbalization in between the widely accepted comprehension and reformulation phases. The triangular model finally came into being, which is definitely a breakthrough of the Paris School. The de-verbalization procedure is the phase when "sense" comes into being, which means the reformulation is produced on the basis of the sense that generates by the interpreter's combination of the linguistic meaning and cognitive language rather than the form of the original language. Hence we can tell that in the process of interpreting, the sense is the object of interpreting. (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2004). Furthermore, the Interpretive Theory not only adds the phase of de-verbalization in the interpreting procedure but also runs a more scientific research on the comprehension and reformulation phases of interpretation and explains both of the phases systematically.

Interpretive Theory believes that translation is not a mere trans-coding operation from one language to another, but as a dynamic communicating process of understanding and reformulating the ideas. The interpreting process is not transforming directly the linguistic meaning from the source language to the target language, but converting the source language to sense and then reformulating the sense in the target language. We will elaborate on the three phases respectively in the following part.

III. STRATEGIES FOR CONFERENCE INTERPRETING

A. *On the Sentence Level*

1. *Restructuring*

Due to the linguistic differences between Chinese and English, a qualified interpreter should be able to use the strategies of restructuring and adjustment to facilitate the understanding of the audiences. As we all know, in English, passive voice and subordinate clauses are commonly used. Meanwhile, longer and more coherent sentences are also frequently adopted. In addition, not like English, many Chinese sentences do not have a clear subject and repetition can be commonly seen in Chinese. Considering of that, during the process of interpretation the interpreter should try to understand the source language thoroughly and restructure the sentences. More attention should be paid to the language differences between the source language and target language. Otherwise, there might be some interpretation which is not in accordance with the manners of expression in target language. Here are some examples as follows:

(1) Wen Jiabao: 本届政府工作走过了四个年头, 它告诉我们, 必须懂得一个真理, 这就是政府的一切权力都是人民赋予的, 一切属于人民、一切为了人民、一切依靠人民、一切归功于人民。 (Han, 2012).

Interpreter: It has been four years since this government took office. These four years have taught us one thing: we must be guided by the fundamental principle that all the power of the government is bestowed on us by the people and that all the power belongs to the people. Everything we do should be for the people; we must rely on the people in all our endeavors, and we owe all achievements to the people. (Han, 2012).

In the above speech, the speaker uses parallel structures in source language. The word“一切”has occurred four times.

However, the interpreter has not used "everything" to convey the sense of the word“一切”all the time. Besides, the interpreter has overcome the influence of Chinese language and restructured the sentences into English expression habit to make the listener more easily understand. Hence, restructuring, as an important strategy in conference interpreting, could be of great help at press conferences.

(2) Wen Jiabao:为什么这两年房地产调控在艰难中看到一点曙光? 有所进展? 首先是我们调控的决心坚定而不动摇; 其次, 我们抓住了一个抑制投机和投资性需求的要害问题, 采取了有针对性的政策措施。(Jiang, 2012).

Interpreter: But why in the past couple of years have we seen a gleam of hope amidst all the difficulties in regulating the housing market? And why have our measures in recent couple of years paid off? It is because first we have a very firm resolve. Second we have been able to put our finger on the cracks of this problem. That is to curb the speculative and investment driven demand, and we have taken focused measures to address this problem. (Fan, 2012).

In this speech, Premier Wen put up a rhetorical question. It is obvious that Premier's remarks follow the loose structure in Chinese expression habit as in the underlined part. Since Chinese language follows a linear structure with few clauses while English language enjoys strict grammatical rules with clauses like branches in a tree, as stated in the underlined part in the above instance, the phrase“有所进展”can be regarded as a complete sentence in Chinese, the subject of which can be inferred from the context. However, because English language requires strict grammar, such expression can't be translated according to its literal structure in target language. So the interpreter has to use the strategy of restructuring to translate this sentence.

2. Generalization

During the process of conference interpreting, the interpreter could have difficulty in grasping all the details of the speech for that a flow of information given continuously by the speaker is too overloaded and intensive. There is another situation that the information given by the speaker is so trivial that there is no necessity to interpret it completely and entirely. For example, a long list of items is given continuously with no pause and the interpreter may not be sure of the precise interpretation for each word. Under such circumstance, generalization proves to be an effective strategy.

Generalization mentioned here refers to a general term adopted by the interpreter to represent a series of items given by the speaker. Through generalization, the main idea of the speech will be maintained without affecting the communication between the speaker and the listener. Furthermore, both time and energy of the interpreter can be saved to better fulfill the task of professional interpretation at press conferences. Still it is noteworthy that when the details mentioned by the speaker are insignificant, the approach of generalization can be applied appropriately. Otherwise every detail of the source language should be interpreted accurately and completely into the target language. The following is several examples taken from the government report given by Premier Wen Jiabao.

(3) Wen Jiabao:在这 15 年当中, 香港走过的路也不平常, 遇到了两次金融危机。但是在特区政府领导下, 港人共同努力战胜了金融危机, 香港至今仍保持着国际金融的地位和高度的自由经济。(Fan, 2012).

Interpreter: Over the past 15 years, Hong Kong has experienced twists and turns and encountered two financial crises. However, under the leadership of the SAR government and with the joint efforts of the Hong Kong compatriots, Hong Kong has successfully overcome the financial crises and maintained its status of international financial center and a high degree of free market economy. (Jiang, 2012).

In this speech, the interpreter translated “香港走过的路也不平常” into “Hong Kong has experienced twists and turns” in target language. It is a nice attempt to do so. “不平常”means marvelous or out of the ordinary from linguistic aspect. Nevertheless, in the speech what the Premier intended to address is the hard time Hong Kong has gone through. The interpreter fully understood the Premier's intention and successfully turned“不平常”into “experienced twists and turns” to convey the sense following target language patterns. Based on Interpretive Theory which indicates the subject of interpreting should be the speaker's intention, it is a good example as the result of generalization.

(4) Wen Jiabao:进一步提高城乡低保、农村五保等保障水平, 提高优抚对象抚恤和生活补助标准。(Cao, 2011).

Interpreter: We will extend greater financial support to both urban and rural recipients of cost of living allowances and to childless and infirm rural residents who receive subsidies for food, clothing, medical care, housing and burial expenses, and increase subsidies and living allowances to members of entitled groups. (Cao, 2011).

In the speech above, the word“五保”is a proper noun in Chinese language, which comes from the Chinese policy of social security. In Chinese language,“五保” refers to the aged, the disabled and the minor with no legal guardian, no working capacity and no fixed source of livelihood who receive subsidies and help from the government for food, clothing, medical care, housing and burial expenses. Instead of translating the term detailed, the interpreter has employed two general attributives “childless and infirm” to describe the Chinese phrase“五保”。

B. On the Text Level

1. Summarization

During the conference interpreting, the interpreter may confront a situation that a flow of long and complex sentences without clear logic and structure are presented to the audiences. Thus it is quite difficult for the audiences to follow the speech even if the interpreter has offered a complete and accurate interpretation of what the speaker has said. In this case, the summarization strategy clarifying the logical relations of different parts of the speech could be helpful for

interpreters to do his work at press conferences. Usually, it is up to the interpreters to clarify the logical relations of the speech through the strategy of summarizations, especially from Chinese into English. One of the main features of Chinese language is parataxis in sentences. (Cao, 2011).

Not much logical links are adopted in Chinese language. When complicated long sentences with parataxis are given by the speaker, it is necessary for the interpreter to resort to summarization in conference interpreting to relieve the foreign audiences. The summarization can be realized through words, phrases or sentences.

(5) Wen Jiabao: 社会各界踊跃捐助款物, 广大香港同胞、澳门同胞、台湾同胞以及海外华侨华人奉献爱心, 国际社会伸出援手, 汇成了齐心协力抗击灾害的磅礴力量。(Cao, 2011).

Interpreter: People from all sectors of society in China made generous donations, both in cash and in kind; our compatriots in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan as well as overseas Chinese contributed generously to the disaster relief campaign; and the international community provided us with earthquake rescue and relief assistance. All this combined to form a boundless source of strength for the Chinese people to overcome the disaster. (Cao, 2011).

In the above speech, we can find that the former parts of the long sentences have similar structure and the last part of the section is presented to the audience as a conclusion. Through the accurate understanding and analyzing of the inner structure of the sentences the interpreter has accurately understand the logical relations of sentences and successfully conveyed the sense of the speech by separating the sentences into two main parts in which the latter part turns out to be an independent one and be started with the subject "all this".

2. Parsing

Parsing in interpretation refers to the strategy of segmenting a long and complicated sentence into several short and simple ones. According to the principle of syntactical linearity, the interpreters need to parse the sentences when necessary. Moreover, parsing could be adopted in conference interpreting for reducing the interpreter's pressure and improving the interpretation since the parsing of long sentences could lead to better coherence of sentences. (Roderick, 2008). As a qualified interpreter, he or she should be required to parse long sentences into information items quickly and reasonably as well as reconnect these items naturally. In spite of its critical role in interpretation, parsing is not preferred in written translation, for it will cause a loose structure in the translation.

(6) Wen Jiabao: 我秉承“苟利国家生死以, 岂因祸福避趋之”的信念, 为国家服务整整 45 年, 我为国家、人民倾注了我全部的热情、心血和精力, 没有谋过私利。我敢于面对人民、面对历史。知我罪我, 其生鲜企丛。(Jiang, 2012).

Interpreter: I have devoted 45 years of my life to the service to my country, remain committed to the conviction that I shall dedicate myself to the interests of country in life and death irrespective of personal weal and woe. I have always made utmost efforts with strong passion and energy to serve the country and people and I have never pursued personal gains. I have the courage to face the people and face the history. There are people who will reanimate what I have done, but there are people who would criticize me. Ultimately, history will have the final say. (Jiang, 2012).

In this speech, Premier Wen quoted two sayings “苟利国家生死以, 岂因祸福避趋之” and “知我罪我, 其生鲜企丛” from Lin Zexu (林则徐) and Confucius respectively. In the translation of the former saying, there happens to be correspondent expressions "life and death", "weal and woe" for the phrases “生死” “祸福” in English. Therefore, the interpreter successfully conveyed the sense of the original saying, the parsing of which follows the turn of expression in target language.

However, as for the translation of the second saying, the case is a little different from the former one. In the translation, the interpreter first explained the meaning of “知我罪我” (There are people who will appreciate what I have done, but there are people who would criticize me.) to help the audience fully understand the message conveyed by the Chinese proverb. Then by adopting the idiom "have the final say" which means to make the final decision or to call the shots, the interpreter reproduced the discourse in target language following the expression pattern in English and made the translation quite agreeable to the recipient.

3. Logical Integration

Chinese is a language which enjoys tacit sense conveyed while the English prefers explicit logic and explanation. Thus, the logical relation in Chinese is not as clear as that in English. As we all know, Chinese prefers short sentences and less conjunctions are employed between the sentences. In Chinese, the words which display the logical relations between parts of sentences do not appear as frequently as in English. However, in English, the logical relation between sentences is usually clearly reflected by its conjunctions, linguistic form, and subordinate clauses. However, it does not mean there is no logical relation among the sentences.

According to the Interpretive Theory, the sense of the source language must be interpreted in a complete and accurate way. The logic of the sentences, which plays a significant role in the comprehension of sense, must be implied in the conference interpreting. Hence, it is necessary for the interpreters to precisely grasp the logical relation of the source language and make a logic-processing when interpreting it into the target language. The examples are put forward as follows:

(7) 台湾《中国时报》记者: 总理, 您好, 我是台湾《中国时报》记者。我想今天请教的问题是在过去四年两岸实现了三通直航, 有关人员往来和经贸交流合作取得了历史性的高峰。过去台湾媒体评价认为, 过去四年大概是两岸关系 60 年来最稳定、最和平发展的四年。未来四年可能要延续这样的发展机遇。在今年政府最后任期一

年里面, 您所期待两岸文化交流前景是什么样的状况? (2012)

Interpreter: Over the past four years, the two sides of the Taiwan Straits have achieved Three Direct Links, and direct air flights. The business exchanges and the people to people contacts across the Taiwan Straits have reached an unprecedented level. Some people in Taiwan say that the past four years have been the most stable and peaceful period in the development of across strait relations over the past more than 60 years. We expect this good momentum is to continue in the following four years. My question is in your last year in office, how do you see the prospects of the cross Straits business ties and cultural exchanges? (Fan, 2012).

Translating the term“三通直航”, the interpreter not only adopted the phrase "Three Direct Links", but also added the information "direct air flights" to the target language context.“三通直航”means“通航、通邮、通商”in Chinese, the corresponding expressions in English are "direct shipping, direct postal service and direct trading". However,“通航, ’in Chinese boasts a dual meaning referring to both "direct shipping" and "direct air flights". Because of the double meaning, the interpreter added the information as in the underlined italicized part to express the connotation of the term explicitly and completely.

Without logical analysis, the interpreter can't make listeners understand the sentence. By referring to the overall sense of the context, the interpreter added the information "our measures in recent couple of years" as the subject in the translation to convey the messages accurately and completely in target text.

IV. CONCLUSION

The press conference held after the conclusion of NPC and CPPCC attracted intensive focus from all over the world. The interpreting study on this field is of vital importance for our country to establish a good national image in the world. So we must try our best to study it.

From what has been discussed above, we know that the basic information about the Interpretive Theory, such as its origin and development during the four decades, the essence of the Interpretive Theory is what the interpreters try to understand and interpret is not the linguistic form of the source language, but the sense and idea the speakers want to convey, so the basic task for the interpreters is to verbalize, thus the meaning of the source language can be grasped and its contributions. Then we discuss four features of press conference interpreting, including speech features, content features, functional features, situational features. Then by studying the Press Conference's interpretation of Premier Li in 2013, we find out the influencing factors and strategies for conference interpreting from the perspective of the Interpretive Theory. So we can know how to interpret better on press conference.

The paper may not cover everything and the ultimate purpose of the present thesis is to call for attention to the application of the Interpretive Theory on press conference interpreting. I do hope that it can pave some ways for the beginners of interpreters and give some help to interpretation majors.

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