

The Application Study of the Interpretive Theory in the College English Course — The Case Study of Qingdao University of Science and Technology

Yue Zhao

Qingdao University of Science and Technology, Qingdao, China

Abstract—The purpose of College English Course has changed greatly in these years. College English learners are no longer passive ones who take English only as tools for relevant materials, but the real users who can listen with efficiency and speak with fluency. The interpretive theory has provided its comprehension formula and de-verbalization training method for a qualified interpreter. And at same time both the interpreter and non-English majors should listen and understand well. So the essay tries to probe into the connection between the two and the specific application method about the interpretive theory in the College English Course.

Index Terms—College English Course, interpretive theories, comprehension, de-verbalization

I. INTRODUCTION

Danica Seleskovitch and Daniel Gile are great representatives of interpretive theories. They both have a thorough research on the concept of understanding and the factors affecting understanding are clearly pointed out in their monographs. The findings are widely employed in different fields, such as the simultaneous interpreting, the consecutive interpreting, even the practical teaching for English-major students. While these theories of understanding are also of great benefits for non-English major undergraduates in their studies, so the application of the understanding theory in the College English Course is under discussion in this passage.

A. *The Concept of Understanding by Seleskovitch*

1. General introduction

In the interpretive theory by Seleskovitch the course of interpreting is not a straight line from the source language to the target language but a triangular process as the following figure displays:

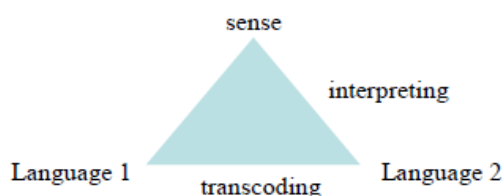


Figure 1 Seleskovitch's Triangular Model of Interpreting

From this figure we can find translation is not a simple mono-directional process, in which an important procedure exists ---- the interpreting of the sense. Seleskovitch (1979) once compare it vividly to unknitting a sweater, where the process of translation from French to English is just like a person undoing a sweater of French style, making a cleaning of the woolen yarn, and knitting it into a new one in British Style. No matter what form it is, either the old French sweater or a new British one, the woolen yarn lying in the mind of an interpreter can not be neglected. Therefore, the process of extraction and conversion of the sense is of great significance for an interpreter.

2. Three stages of translation

The scholars working on the interpretive theory also probe into the translation stages to answer the question “How to extract the underlying sense”. The interpretive theory argues that an interpreter can virtually convert the speaker's speech to the audience of another language via three stages.

Stage one----Interpretation of Discourse. In this stage, the interpreter must catch the linguistic symbols of the source language, and make sure about the information conveyed by these linguistic symbols with the help of linguistic knowledge from the interpreter's former study.

Stage two----De-verbalization. During this stage, the interpreter is to forget the linguistic symbols and language structures of stage one. The conveyed information or the sense exaction is the very thing that he is to commit to memory.

Stage three----reformulation. New sentences of the target language are formed in accordance to the following two

points: the contents are fully covered and the new expressions should follow the linguistic rules of the target language and be easy to understand.

From the study of these three stages, it can be easily found that de-verbalization is an original attainment of the interpretive theory, and it is also an essential procedure in translation. But how can we efficiently extract and convert the sense through de-verbalization to achieve understanding of the highest level? Seleskovitch (1968) pointed out that the generation of sense depends on sufficient common knowledge among the participants. Therefore, in the process of listening an interpreter is not to analyze the language phenomenon, but to recall the cognitive knowledge stored in his brains via a cluster of speeches from the speaker. That is, the production of the sense is the combination of the linguistic knowledge with the cognitive meaning the interpreter perceived in the real world.

3. The feasibility of the interpretive theory for non-English majors

In some capacity, English major students are superior to non-English major undergraduates from the perspective of linguistic knowledge. However, laying more emphases on the language itself, the former have little advantages concerning the cognitive knowledge which can be recalled in the language utilization, whereas the strengths of non-English major college students are fully demonstrated in the following example. "Sodium lauryl sulfate" appearing in the interpretation, for English major students, is no other than a chemical term which is not only difficult to recite but also to some degree something that can never be overcome if they don't know the term. While to the students of chemistry, it is a familiar noun as well as some surfactant which can be applied in the production of tooth paste, shampoo, detergent and even drugs with the features of moistening, decontamination and foaming. The interpreter with the real cognitive knowledge will have little difficulty in understanding and predicting what to translate. So we can find easily that in interpretation the latter is sure to have a better performance than those who have trouble in remembering the special term. From the above analysis, it is obvious that cognitive language is very crucial for English learners to obtain a better understanding. As Seleskovitch remarks "We will never be able to perform a heart transplant, but we must certainly master the terminology well enough to explain it." (Elliott, 1987, p.110)

B. *The Understanding Model of Daniel Gile*

1. Definition

Daniel Gile (1995), a renowned representative of interdisciplinary empirical approach in ESIT, attached great importance to the significance of understanding in the course of interpreting in his monograph *Basic Concepts and Models for Translator and Interpreter Training*, in which he established basic understanding model: $c=kl+ekl+a$. (c:comprehension; kl: knowledge of the language; ekl: extra-linguistic knowledge; a: deliberate analysis).

This formula indicates that three elements are needed to achieve a rather good understanding: higher level of linguistic knowledge, abundant extra-linguistic knowledge and good capacity of logical analysis. Linguistic knowledge and extra-linguistic knowledge are interdependent, the relationship between which could be best set up by the logical analysis of an interpreter, so that efficient understanding of the source language can show up.

In the past, learning English means to obtain related information in some fields with English as a tool. Whereas, nowadays the goal of College English Course has reversed to fluent communication in English and comprehensive capacity of English utilization, especially in listening and speaking. While a good command of comprehension ability will boost listening correspondingly. And a good listener usually result in a good speaker in English. Therefore, to achieve this purpose, the overall ability for undergraduates should be proportionately developed.

2. knowledge of the language

Knowledge of the language is the basic requirement. As for the present students, most of them began to learn English in their primary school. So at college, they have been endowed with enough foundation and time to grasp some knowledge of language by themselves before lectures. Thus, it is feasible for college English teachers to introduce more theories and practice about comprehensive skills of interpretive theories to them in College English Course.

3. extra-linguistic knowledge

Jean Herbert (1982), a celebrated interpreter, argues that an outstanding interpreter should know everything of something and know something of everything. Professor Zhongshu Kong (1999) also states, an interpreter is to act as an encyclopaedia, who is not only a master of language but also an expert in his major field. For instance, a tourism interpreter should be familiar with the local food culture as well as its local customs and practices; An business interpreter should know business terms and related business affairs as well. As a matter fact, the solid knowledge of language being far from enough, abundant extra-linguistic knowledge can make a trump card for an qualified interpreter.

4. deliberate analysis

In essence, the process of interpreting is a procedure of creation, in which good capacity of logical analysis is the most significant factor. Gengshen Hu (1993), Professor of Tsinghua University, summarizes the stage of interpreting into four words --- "listening, remembering, thinking, and expressing", all of which are in great relation to logical analysis. "Listening" means not listening passively, but to analyze the source language and filter information to make a good preparation for the next step. "Remembering" includes note-taking and learning by heart. It is storage and extraction of the in-put information after analyzing, filtering, processing and encoding. "Thinking" is the identification, analysis and reconstruction about the source materials. In the end the interpreter should wording carefully to "express" in a fluent way.

C. Comments on the Two Theories

From the above introduction, we can find the both theorists lay emphasis on the factors of better understanding. Cognitive knowledge and extra-linguistic knowledge are put forward, while the two is to some extent of the same connotative meaning. That is, to have a better understanding, the linguistic knowledge is far from enough, the rich outer knowledge can be of a powerful help. In this sense, non-English major college students preponderate over English major ones. So the article is to prove the interpretive theory can be used not only in professional English classes, but also in College English Courses.

II. THE QUESTIONNAIRE

A questionnaire on the familiarity of the interpretive theory was conducted among the 500 college students from majors of marketing management, law, software, and physics in Qindao University of Science and Technology. 466 valid copies were collected.

TABLE 1
NON-ENGLISH MAJORS' VIEW ON THE INTERPRETIVE THEORY

contents	options		B		C		D	
	A	%		%		%		%
1. Your familiarity about the interpretive theory?	Rather well.	1.8	Only a little.	39.7	Not much.	43.6	Nothing.	14.9
2. Your opinion about memory training.	Prefer to conduct it.	12.1	Want to have a try.	72.5	No opinion.	9.7	Burdensome and dislike.	5.7
3. Your viewpoint on note-taking training.	Have a fancy on it.	20.4	Want to have a try.	59.9	No opinion.	1.5	Burdensome and dislike.	4.7
4. Your view on cross-cultural communication.	Have great interest.	45.6	Seems good.	45.4	No opinion.	6.7	Burdensome and dislike.	2.3
5. Ideal training ways	Dual degree lectures.	14.2	Professional training institutes.	16.8	College English Course.	46.8	Selective courses.	22.2
6. Your standpoint on after-class practice.	Glad to do that.	45.2	Not too much is acceptable.	31.9	A little can be accepted.	19.2	Burdensome and dislike.	4.7

As a matter of fact, quantities of students are not satisfied with the traditional teaching mode in College English Class. They are in great desire to improve their listening and speaking capacity, but distressed by no specific and efficient guidance on training and methods.

Whereas, from the above table we can find though the participants have little familiarity on the interpretive theory, yet they have great interest in the detail contents. 46.8% of the candidates show their willingness to learn it in the College English Class, and 45.2% would do after-class training independently, which indicate that a great number of students are willing to accept the interpretive training methods in their College English Courses. Furthermore, the number of students who have interest in cross-cultural knowledge amounts to 90%, which offers a good opportunity to cultivate college students' cross-cultural awareness demanded by College English Curriculum Requirements. (Ministry of Education, 2007).

III. THE APPLICATION STUDY

A. The Application of the Interpretive Theory in the Intensive Reading Class

1. The necessity to reform the current teaching mode

Word explanation, text translation, passage analysis and consolidation exercises are the usual steps in the traditional College English Class. Under this mode the students can not avoid the passive state of listening and taking down notes only no matter how excellent the sentence examples the teacher gives, how clearly the teacher deals with the text, and how thoroughly the exercises are practiced. Under this mode, the number of the willing students to the classroom can never be satisfied no matter how hard the teacher works.

Traditional College Classes can not keep in this condition for good. As a matter of fact, a majority of college students who have realized that their communicative capacity in English for future use is their top priority suffer greatly in the traditional passive class. All above have sounded the note of warning to reform the current intensive reading class.

2. How to perform

Language points such as words and expressions are the bricks for the construction of the language building. We want the building. But what kind of building is it, a hut or a skyscraper? We can choose who are the builders, and who are engineers. Since present undergraduates have been entitled with solid foundation and enough capacity to preview by themselves after years of learning since their primary school. Basic vocabulary can be left for them via reference books or Internet. At this stage, teachers are supervisors to check the process and instruct the key points. Similarly, the main idea of the passage can be made out by learners while teacher's task lies in the explanation of difficult points. Students are to be more active during the course of lecture, in which "student-centered approach" should be adopted. As is seen in the following table.

TABLE 2
LEARNING PROCEDURES OF AN INTENSIVE TEADING PASSAGE

Procedure	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Contents	Dealing with difficult sentences	Topic sentences	Key words	Retelling the passage according to the key words	Similar listening materials

From the above table, it indicates that a passage learning means no words, translation and exercises only any longer. With the guidance of the teacher, students learn to find out topic sentences and key words and expressions, according to which a student should represent the passage in his words. Thus, just like a live marionette, the language and information of passage are linked in a string, making them part of their cognitive reservation, which accumulates more and more with the passage of time. Last, one or two listening materials of the similar topic is to provided. Some questions are then asked to check how well they understand them. In this case, students can achieve mastery through a comprehensive study of the subject.

Of course the whole procedures are not frozen, teachers should manage the difficulty and pace and convert anytime when necessary according to the students' condition.

B. The Application of the Interpretive Theory in the Listening Class

1. Brief introduction of de-verbalization

De-verbalization, an original breakthrough of interpretive theories, is a specific process and positions importantly. The process is compared to a cicada casting off its skin ---to remain the essence (the most important part), which demonstrates that the key point of interpreting is to extract the meaning, and the convey of the meaning is the basic task in interpreting.

To further the discussion, Seleskovitch (1992) proposed a question: "Which one is easier to recite a lecture of 500 words or the plot of a movie about 2 hours?" The answer is obvious. Short as 500-word passage, it is not an easy job than the movie. For the same person, it may take him an hour or so to recite the passage and at the same time it may be a tough job. Whereas, it's much easier for him to remember the movie, much less the details of the plot can be clearly recalled. That is to say, he can remember the whole movie. From the above example, we can find there are two ways to commit something into memory, content-memory method and word-memory method. The feature of the former is that one can easily retell once he understands the content. While the latter may need longer time and repeated memorizing. We can conclude, it may take several hours to recite an article about 1500 words to 2000 words, and the final memorizing must result from the comprehensive understanding and speedy analysis of the contents. However, the audience learns the movie by heart just because he understands it. So the method to remember the movie is the same one to extract the meaning in de-verbalization. Specifically, images only, but no language.

2. De-verbalization in the listening class

Nowadays, the teaching procedure in most college listening class is listening to the material one by one, doing exercises, teacher's explanation, and checking the answers according to the textbooks. Sure, some listening strategies are sometimes introduced and practiced. Here, listening and understanding are the same requirements and phases in interpreting. So it must be feasible and beneficial to introduce the method of de-verbalization to non-English majors in their listening practice.

De-verbalization training in college English listening course can be divided into the following aspects.

a. Divergent thinking practice. Divergent thinking training is of great benefit for kids to develop their imagination and creativity. Active divergent thinking mode can predict efficiently in listening, in correspondence, students can listen better with less difficulty. However, before the national entrance examination, most students are forced just to learn and remember passively. Thus their ability of divergent thinking is greatly curbed. While this ability counts a lot in listening, so teachers should take every means to redevelop it. In fact, the practice is not that difficult. What the teacher should do is to offer the key word for every topic that will be dealt with in the listening material. Then, students are to present anything concerned with the key word. The collected answers are no difference in importance or correction. It's well done that the conclusion is supplied at the end. And the divergent thinking practice will boost jump thinking ability, which will in turn lead to active de-verbalization.

b. Framework constructed by key words. The purpose of divergent thinking practice is to broaden students' thinking scope, producing a substantial amount of information. And this step is to string the seemingly disordered information through some logic. The detail practice is to collect five to eight words which students give in the former practice or from the would-be listening material. Then ask students to make up a paragraph with these words in some logical order. This practice is just like the mentioned knitting process by Seleskovitch. That is the interpreter recall the cognitive knowledge from their minds at the hearing the speaker. Here students' cognitive information awakes and is processed, which is the real conduct of de-verbalization. This step is the key point of de-verbalization training in college English training.

c. Imagery of numbers. Figuring out the framework for a portrait by stringing points is merely a basic step, we need some detailed outlining to make the picture more vivid. Numbers in English passage are this kind of strokes. Because we have different carries in numbers between Chinese and English, students should be familiar with the following units, such as ten thousand, hundred thousand, ten million, and hundred million. On the other hand, the interpreter is required to master big numbers correctly. However, the requirement is much looser for non-English majors. They are only asked

to take down the figures of thousand. The key point for trainees to remember is to write down the numbers they hear quickly in numerical forms, without translating them into Chinese. The practice can be conducted firstly between the teacher and students in class, then among students autonomously, from one sentence to a short paragraph then even longer. Through repeated practice the energy devoted to the numbers in listening must be deducted greatly. Thus the efficiency of listening can be actually promoted.

d. Concretization of the sentence, dialogues and passage. As is known to all there are two types of thinking in our minds ---- left-brain thinking type and right-brain thinking type. Words, speech, numbers and analysis belong to left-brain thinking, which is to some extent a kind of rational thinking. While images, music, shape and color are right-brain thinking type, which features intuitive thinking. So sometimes we define our left-brain as “text brain”, right brain “image brain”. Our right brain will convert what we hear and what we think into pictures and then to think and memorize. Photographic memory, a superb memorizing approach, takes advantage of our right-brain’s image processing ability. For a large chunk of text, our right brain can reflect them in the form of one or several pictures like a camera. In this way the contents of the text can be remembered with a higher speed and for a longer time than left-brain thinking way.

This principle displays the detailed method of de-verbalization in listening practice. That is, at hearing a word, students should learn to form the image of the word in their minds, but not English words or Chinese meaning. For example, about the sentence “An old lady went to the supermarket for some vegetables”, a picture which contains three elements----an old lady, supermarket and vegetables should take shape in students’ mind but not the English sentence or the Chinese translation version. When the information is needed, pictures with information will appear. In this way, full information can be supplied but with no consumption of conversion time. This is so-called removing the language shell, leaving only the meaning. Of course this training needs practicing step by step, from the simple sentence to dialogues and then paragraphs. Actually long-time training, a long passage read to the student, only a few pictures would remain in his mind. But when checked, perhaps, he can handle with few mistakes.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the questionnaire on the students of Qingdao University of Science and Technology and the theoretical analysis of the comprehension validity and de-verbalization in interpreting theories, this essay illustrates the specific application practice of some principles of the interpreting theory in the College English Course. From the above analysis we can find non-English majors have more advantages on extra-linguistic knowledge, so they can have a better understanding. In the meanwhile, de-verbalization can facilitate college students’ listening comprehension. All in all with the introduction of new teaching practice in College English Course, students are sure to benefit in their English learning.

REFERENCES

- [1] Daniel Gile. (1995). *Basic Concepts and Models for Translator and Interpreter Training*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- [2] D. Seleskovitch. (1968). 1968 L’interprète dans les conférences internationales, problèmes de langage et de communication, Washington D.C, Pen ad Booth.
- [3] D. Seleskovitch. (1992). *Interpréter pour Traduire*. Beijing: Beijing Language and Culture University Press.
- [4] D. Seleskovitch & M. Lederer. (1979). *Pedagogie Raisonnee De L’interpretation*. Beijing: China Translation & Publishing Corporation.
- [5] Elliott, Lawrence. (1987). Interpreters in the World. *The World of English* No. 6, 106-114.
- [6] Hu Gengshen. (1993). *How To Be An Good Interpreter*. Beijing. Press of University of Science and Technology of China.
- [7] Jean Herbert. (1982). *Manuel de l’interprète comment on devient interprète de conférences*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- [8] ZhongShu Kong. (1999). *Practical Interpreting Handbook*. Beijing: China Translation & Publishing Corporation.

Yue Zhao was born in Harbin, China in 1976. She received her master degree in MTI from Qingdao University of Science and Technology, China in 2013.

She is currently a lecturer in the School of Foreign Languages, Qingdao University of Science and Technology, Qingdao, China. Her research interests are cross-cultural communication, interpretive theory and teaching method studies in College English Course. Ms Zhao specializes on the research in these fields, and till now has headed three projects issued by different departments of the government in Shandong province.