

Analysis of the Consecutive Interpreting Strategies of Yu Qiuyu's speech at the 3rd Asian Culture Forum

Wanru Feng^{1,*}

¹ Southwest Petroleum University, Sichuan, Chengdu, China

* Corresponding author: Wanru Feng (Email: 1835190917@qq.com)

Abstract: Consecutive interpreting, as a form of bilingual communication, is extensively used during international conference speeches. To ensure the successful completion of interpretation tasks, interpreters should have a strong language foundation, broad interdisciplinary knowledge, and be skilled at employing various cohesion techniques. Cohesion devices help interpreters effectively organize the overall structure of the text or discourse, resulting in semantically clear, logically organized, thematically coherent, and structurally rigorous renditions. Drawing on cohesion theory in functional linguistics, this paper utilizes a case analysis to examine the strategies of consecutive interpreting during Yu Qiuyu's speech at the Third Asian Culture Forum. International conference interpretation serves as the bridge of communication and plays an important role in modern society. There are three processes of translation: pre-interpreting preparation, the application of cohesion theory in interpretation, and interpreting assessment are launched. Several practical and effective tactics are presented to implement the cohesive theory and put it into practice. The paper aims to provide insights for enhancing interpreting abilities, fostering cross-cultural communication skills, and serving as reference for international conference interpreting and Chinese-English consecutive interpreting teaching.

Keywords: Consecutive interpreting; Interpreting strategies; Cohesion Theory; Yu Qiuyu's speech.

1. Introduction

Consecutive interpreting refers to a communicative language practice in which the interpreter instantly and accurately transforms information heard in one language to another through oral expression. The purpose is to convey information and facilitate cross-cultural exchanges. The study of interpretation has gradually evolved into an independent discipline with its own academic significance. Recently, an increasing number of translation scholars have devoted themselves to interdisciplinary studies. In the field of systemic functional linguistics, the theory of cohesion in discourse offers theoretical guidance for consecutive interpreting. Interpreters can flexibly utilize various cohesive devices, transform, and reconstruct language components in line with the conventions of the target languages in interpreting practice. This enables them to achieve equivalent meaning conversion from source texts to target texts.

Discourse is an essential element of language communication, encompassing both form and logic. As a crucial form of communication, speech is primarily used to express the speaker's perspective on a particular issue, aiming to persuade the audience to accept their viewpoint and engage in relevant social activities. In order to achieve textual coherence, interpreters need to consciously employ various cohesive devices to construct smooth and coherent discourses.

Through online information retrieval, the author selected Yu Qiuyu's speech at the Third Asian Culture Forum as a case that had not been studied on CNKI as consecutive interpreting material. Based on the video of his speech, the author performed simulated consecutive interpreting, recorded the interpretation, and organized the transcribed text. With the guidance of the coherence theory of interpretation, the author analyzed the Chinese-English interpreting strategies used in the speech.

2. Theoretical Foundation

Cohesion theory is a concept within the field of functional linguistics, which examines how texts or discourses are connected through grammatical or lexical methods. According to systemic-functional grammar, every element of a text in a particular style of language is linked to an additional layer of meaning within the discourse. The discourse meanings, which include field, tenor, and mode, correspond to three meta-functions: ideational function, interpersonal function, and textual function. Cohesion, as a component of textual metafunction, represents the realization of textual coordination in both lexicon and grammar. This has increasingly become the focus of many translation studies.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) conducted a pioneering study on English cohesion, dividing it into two types and illustrating them with examples: grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion, which are expressed in the form of grammar and vocabulary.

Grammatical cohesion consists of reference, ellipsis, substitution, and conjunction. Lexical cohesion devices include repetition, collocation, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, and so on. These lexical units are inherently interconnected, working together to unify the theme and semantic field of discourse, resulting in an organized and coherent continuum of discourse. The prominent feature of grammatical cohesion in discourse lies in the use of various conjunctions, while the lexical cohesion of a discourse is precisely based on the selection of lexical items.

Blum-Kulka speculated that translators will likely employ a more evident cohesion as a strategy to create a high-quality translation or interpreting version. This is because the syntactic structures in translated texts need to be logically coherent with each other for the target text reader and listener, which relies on cohesive devices. This model of discourse

analysis has been well-received by many translation theorists with a focus on linguistics. Cohesion is not the sole factor contributing to the coherence of textual structure and meaning. However, it is an essential element for ensuring the completeness and accuracy of an interpreted text.

According to the “Continuous Interpretation Model” proposed by interpretation scholar Gile (1995), in the first stage of consecutive interpreting, interpreters need to listen, analyze, and then take notes. The next step is to coordinate the information stored in short-term memory. In the second stage, they recall important information and take notes, creating their own version of the translation.

3. Process Description

In this section, the interpreter first introduces the initial stage, known as pre-interpreting preparation. Under the guidance of cohesion theory, she integrated the factors that affect comprehension while interpreting Yu Qiuyu’s speech in a simulated practice, in order to discuss specific strategies with examples.

3.1. Pre-Interpreting Preparation

Interpreting is a bilingual operation with high demands for practicality and effectiveness, making it a professional and challenging field. For one thing, the essential qualities of a competent interpreter include strong bilingual skills and proficiency in listening, memory, and quick reaction. Furthermore, interpreters’ comprehensive knowledge beyond language, such as encyclopedic extra-linguistic knowledge, is also crucial in the context of frequent cross-cultural communication. Therefore, they should enhance the learning of both the mother tongue and foreign language culture to address difficulties in interpreting cultural images. The enhancement of psychological well-being is also a gradual process. Furthermore, various oral interpreting skills should be developed through consistent practice.

Adequate pre-interpreting preparation is also essential for high-quality interpreting. Prior to undertaking interpreting tasks, one should be well-informed about topics related to the source language, including background knowledge and specialized terminology. The interpreter should be acquainted with the background information in advance. To start, she watched Yu Qiuyu’s other speech videos to familiarize herself with his speaking style, pace, and accent. Additionally, the interpreter made some initial predictions about the terms that could be included in the speech. For example, the three ancient civilizations in Asia are Mesopotamian civilization, Chinese civilization, and Indian civilization. After analyzing the entire speech, the interpreter decided to employ cohesion strategies to address specific issues mentioned in the speech. The interpreter consulted numerous scientific literature sources on cohesion theory and found it to be applicable to this simulated consecutive interpreting practice.

3.2. The application of cohesion theory in interpretation

English is a hypotactic language with a cohesion-prominent structure that relies on various explicit forms, such as lexical and morphological changes, as well as functional words, to represent the grammatical meaning or logical relations between linguistic units and words, clauses, and sentences. Chinese emphasizes parataxis, where the connection between sentence components or clauses depends

on the sequence and internal logical relations of the situations described by the words and sentences. Fu Lei (1981) once said that foreign languages are analytical like prose, while Chinese is comprehensive like poetry. These two different aesthetic principles make it difficult to reconcile the vocabularies of both sides. When translating Chinese into highly formalized English, much of the information from the source text will inevitably be conveyed through overt cohesion devices. Otherwise, it is difficult to meet the translation standards of “faithfulness” and “expressiveness”.

So, interpreters often use cohesive devices, such as connectives, to make the implicit logical relations between the sentences of the source text clear. This section focuses on a comparative analysis of Chinese original texts and their English translations, examining their cohesive devices such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, synonymy, and hyponymy from both grammatical and lexical perspectives.

3.2.1. Reference

Reference can be used as a grammatical cohesive marker in a text to indicate subsequent parts. This includes personal pronoun reference, demonstrative pronoun reference, and contrastive reference. Using word phrases that indicate the previous semantic components can enhance the clarity and conciseness of the texts, as well as contribute to smooth and natural paragraphs.

Example 1:

SL:

亚洲文明古老，亚洲文明之间有辉煌、衰败、复兴、奋斗，这些全部都是我们的经验。

Interpreter: The Asian civilization is rather old, and it has undergone periods of glory, decline, struggle, and revival throughout its development. All of these are our experiences.

Analysis: The pronoun “it” and the demonstrative “these” refer to “The Asian civilization” mentioned above. This device reveals a close connection between relevant words and phrases. In general, Chinese tends to use repetitive structures, while English tends to use referential structures to avoid repetition. The flexible use of the references makes the translation readily understandable for the target language audiences.

3.2.2. Ellipsis

Ellipsis refers to the omission of certain identical linguistic elements in a text, which is a commonly used technique in the process of interpreting [5]. If interpreters do not grasp the abstract meaning at the moment of interpreting, they can omit redundant content and the parts that do not influence the general idea.

Example 2:

SL:

如果说欧美文化是一马平川，那么亚洲有那么多深山峡谷，那么多小海湾，那么多奇怪角落，组成了一种看不见说不完的非具有奇特性的丰富文化生态。

Interpreter: The culture of Europe and the United States is plain to some extent. Asia, however, with its numerous deep mountains, valleys, small bays, and other unique terrains, has become the cradle of a rich ecological civilization characterized by distinctive cultures.

Analysis: In this instance, the interpreter employs the cohesion method of ellipsis. The Chinese expression “如果说” in the original sentence is omitted, and the logical conjunctive “however” is added to indicate an adversative transition. The Chinese word “那么” does not have practical meanings

because it does not really refer to a result. From a functional language perspective, this word is used as a pause. The speaker used the word to give themselves more time to think, so the interpreter does not translate it. This way, the speaker's intention can be highlighted. The colloquial Chinese expression “那么多” appears three times in the sentence, which is justified in an impromptu speech. Moreover, the speaker likely intended to highlight the distinctiveness of the Asian terrain. To minimize the memory burden, the interpreter combines these three adverbs into one and adds the conjunctive word “and” to connect parallel nouns, eliminating verbose expression. While understanding the fundamental meaning of the original text, the translator removes certain parts of the sentences to create a more concise, accurate, and cohesive translation.

3.2.3. Conjunction

A conjunction represents the logical relationships between different elements in a text. There are juxtapositions, transitional conjunctions and temporal conjunctions, etc. The typical examples include “and”, “but”, “however”, “at first”, “then”, “finally”. These connecting words lead the meaning of the previous constituents in a consistent or opposite direction.

Example 3:

SL:

我曾被国际媒体评为最勇敢的男人，主要就是讲我为了考察文化走过了很多恐怖主义的地区。

Interpreter: I was once named the bravest man by the international media, mainly because with the purpose of studying cultures, I have explored a number of areas where rife with terrorism.

Analysis: Conjunction words are typically used to connect different linguistic forms in a direct and logical manner. In this sentence, the translator used the conjunction “because” to clarify the concept of cause and effect. In the process of interpreting the entire speech, interpreters can use conjunctions as cohesive devices to achieve coherence. If the interpreters understand conjunction logic, they will clarify the semantic relations among these compositional constituents, thus accurately conveying the speaker's intentions. As a result, the target language audiences are relieved of the pressure of understanding the general idea of the speech.

3.2.4. Substitution

Substitution is one of the cohesive means that display clear semantic relations in texts. It refers to the process of replacing one part of the text with other syntactic constructions. The grammatical alternatives generated by substituting word in texts can reduce the occurrence of over-lengthy sentences.

Example 4:

SL:

亚洲文化亟待阐述。亚洲悠久和多元的文化还没有获得很好的表述，亚洲文化缺失了近代化的全球话语。

Interpreter: Asian culture needs elaboration. The time-honored and diverse culture of Asia, for example, does so. It has not been well represented, therefore resulted in a missing global discourse in modern times.

Analysis: In this case, the interpreter uses a cohesion device called substitution. The speaker informed the audience that there is an urgent need to elaborate on Asian culture. In order to ensure coherent translation, the interpreter uses the verbal substitution “does” to replace the expression “needs elaboration.” Zhu (2001) stated that the omission structure presupposes the existence of substituted components, which

enhances the coherence of the text or discourse. Substitution, as a grammatical tool, can help avoid repetition and emphasize new information, thereby ensuring concise text. Furthermore, the interpreter conveys the implied semantic relationship of the speaker by using the conjunctive word “therefore” to explicitly demonstrate the structure of the discourse. It is easy for audiences of the target language to accept the translations.

3.2.5. Synonymy

As one of lexical cohesive markers, synonymy refers to the way in which the synonyms are reproduced from the selection of words. The lexical relationships are represented by the linguistic units or syntactic constructions that convey similar meanings in terms of style, emotion, and usage.

Example 5:

SL:

比如泉州的老街道，要让这些老街道活起来，一定是当代人纷纷扰扰的脚步把它踩活了，一定是中国人、亚洲人、很多人的脚步、创造者的脚步把它踩活。

Interpreter: Taking the old streets of Quanzhou as an example, the revival of these historic streets resorts to the bustling footsteps of contemporary people, which brings the old streets to life. The footsteps of Chinese and Asian individuals, as well as those of creators and others are also really matters.

Analysis: There are similar semantic connections between the two lexical forms “the revival” and “bring to life” both of which mean “活” in Chinese. The interpreter converts the original Chinese verb into an English noun; this transformation of parts of speech contributes to the flexible organization of the texts. The two words serve as synonyms, clearly demonstrating their complementary relationship and emphasizing the theme that the old streets of Quanzhou need to be infused with modern vitality. The interpreter employed the strategy of free translation in the last sentence. She omits the same expression mentioned twice before and instead interprets it as “also really matters”. The discourse becomes an organic semantic whole due to the clever selection of synonyms, effectively avoiding monotony and redundancy that may result from repetition. Thanks to the rich language used, the speech interpretation will become extremely appealing. And, most importantly, will leave a lasting impression on the audiences.

3.2.6. Hyponymy

Hyponymy is a lexical cohesive device that links superordinate words with their hyponyms. A superordinate is a higher-level term that encompasses several hyponyms. Hyponymy connects linguistic units of different classes, revealing a hierarchical structure.

Example 6:

SL:

非常希望他们能够懂得要加入更悠久的亚洲智慧，加入更灿烂的东方文化，这才是人类的共同财富。

Interpreter: I really hope that the western people will learn to blend together the older Asian wisdom and other insights, expand engagement with Oriental countries, and embrace more splendid Oriental culture for it is also the common wealth of humankind.

Analysis: In this case, the term “Asia” is a hyponym of the superordinate term “Orient”, forming a semantic relationship of hyponymy. During the process of interpretation, the interpreter incorporates the transitional phrase “expand engagement with Oriental countries” based on the target

language's expression norms and the contextual requirements. This approach not only allows for more time to formulate thoughts but also enhances the cohesion and coherence of the discourse. The three parallel verbs "blend", "expand", and "embrace" are used to strengthen the speaker's persuasive tone. The interpreter provides essential background information based on the content of the source language and handles lexical cohesion relations flexibly in order to preserve the meaning of the source language to the fullest extent possible.

3.3. Typical Strategies Applied in This Interpreting Practice

This section discusses some typical interpreting techniques, including addition, the principle of syntactic linearity, and conversion. The reasonable application of these techniques can assist in bridging the cohesion theory and completing interpreting tasks.

3.3.1. Amplification

Amplification involves adding words and phrases to accurately convey the meaning of the original text and align with the expressive styles and cultural context of the target language. In Chinese, words such as subjects, objects, possessive pronouns, and conjunctions are usually omitted. In C-E interpretation, interpreters should have a thorough understanding of the original texts or discourses and should add relevant information as needed to ensure that audiences do not feel confused. Interpreters can incorporate dangling participles such as "honestly speaking" and "taking everything into consideration," as well as discourse markers like "well," "that is to say," and "I believe that" to ensure the fluency of the interpreting.

Example 7:

SL:

我们的创造就可能按照这样一个规模输送到整个世界，也让亚洲国家互相确认，在确认过程中提升。

Interpreter: Our creations can be transported to the whole world in such a large scale. Asian countries can thereby confirm with each other, and the confirmation process will, in turn, enhance the strengths of member countries in Asia.

Analysis: In this example, the interpreter is concerned about whether the audience can understand the speaker's meaning in a relatively short time. Therefore, she provides additional explanation by supplementing words related to the meaning and background information. She adds the adjective "large" to avoid ambiguity and better complement the meaning of the context. The term "large scale" refers to the "magnificent transportation lines" mentioned earlier. Furthermore, the interpreter selected the connective "thereby" and the phrase "in turn" to establish semantic connections in the source language sentences, aiming to enhance the listener's comprehension. The interpreter transcends the constraints of the rigid sentence structure of the source language by including the object "strengths" of the verb "enhance" in the reformulation.

3.3.2. The Principle of Syntactic Linearity

In written translation, we often adjust the word order to align with the language habits of the target language due to differences between English and Chinese. During interpretation, interpreters need to start translating before the whole sentence is completed. In such cases, the principle of syntactic linearity helps interpreters focus on receiving new information.

The medium for interpreting activities is spoken language, which has a very brief duration. Due to the immediacy of interpretation and the limitations of the human memory mechanism, the burden of information processing becomes heavy. The interpreter tends to remember the meaning instead of the original text forms, so they adopt the method of syntactic linearity with less effort.

Example 8:

SL:

亚洲文化是丰富，他们也点头认同，但他们始终觉得没法和他们的文化相提并论。

Interpreter: The Asian culture is rich, they agree with this view, but they have always been full of haughty disdain. They considered it is inferior to their own culture.

Analysis: In this case, the speaker presents an object clause first and then identifies the subject and the subject's action. It is not common to present the object before citing the subject and verb in English. In written translation, the order of the sentence can be adjusted as follows: They acknowledge the richness of Asian culture. However, during the interpretation process, the interpreter may find it difficult to refine sentences due to time constraints. Therefore, she follows the original sentence order and skillfully employs cohesive means of substitution while adhering to the principle of syntactic linearity. Although it seems slightly less concise, this approach effectively conveys the speaker's meaning. "点头" is a vivid expression of "认同". The interpreter believes that both expressions mean agreement, so she neglects the first one. The interpreter uses the conjunctive word "but" to indicate a transitional meaning and adds a clause to describe the attitude of certain Western people. This helps to better illustrate the critical situation of Asian culture.

3.3.3. Conversion

Conversion is a word-formation process in which a word is changed from one part of speech to another. Due to differences in grammar and expression habits between English and Chinese, interpreters often modify the word class to effectively convey the exact meaning. In English, there is only one predicate verb in a sentence. In Chinese, however, verbs are not limited in a sentence. Therefore, in Chinese-English interpreting, Chinese verbs must be transformed into English nouns, adjectives, prepositions, adverbs, etc. Furthermore, the transformation of sentence components involves converting subjects into adverbials, predicates, and other elements. Interpreters frequently use this strategy to achieve the translation goal of appropriateness and accuracy. The use of conversion can align with the habitual expression and thinking mode of the target language, making interpretation more authentic and coherent.

Example 9:

SL:

我们的经验告诉大家，差异有可能获得很好的享受。

Interpreter: Past experience suggested us that the pleasures are potentially derived from the differences.

Analysis: In this example, the interpreter connects two sentences into one using an object clause. She also rearranges the word order and employs the tactic of conversion, turning an active sentence into a passive one. Traditionally, the term "enjoyment" refers to the recipient of the action "secure", but it is transformed into a subject to better emphasize its significance. Modern linguists suggest that an object refers to an item that can become a subject in passive transformation. Conversion is an interpreting strategy that emphasizes the

autonomy of the cultural system between the source and the target language. It can facilitate cross-cultural communication and enhance the conveyance of profound meanings in the source language. In Chinese, there are culturally significant idioms, including indigenous jargon and two-part allegorical sayings.

Example 10:

SL:

我认真地讲了亨廷顿先生这个学术上的错误，他只讲差异和差异之间的边界，不知道实际存在状态是互相交流的。

Interpreter: I discussed seriously about the academic error of Mr. Huntington, who only focused on the distinct boundaries among differences without the recognition of the actual condition in which they are linked by mutual communication.

Analysis: In this instance, the interpreter transforms the verb “know” into the noun “recognition”. This is a standard practice of converting parts of speech to emphasize the main content and align with the preferences of the target language audience. The use of the attributive clause “in which” in a sentence serves as a connection to make the interpretation concise, coherent, and achieve the communicative purpose. Translating these sentences literally can be challenging because they rely heavily on implicit meanings embedded in a loose structure, which could potentially confuse foreign audiences.

3.4. Interpreting Assessment

For interpreters, timely reflection after interpretation is an essential step. It involves organizing and summarizing the issues encountered during the process of interpretation. The interpreters add to their personal vocabulary to match the information they have collected, checking for any gaps or omissions in their interpretation. This process facilitates the effective utilization of gathered knowledge, enabling efficient handling of ever-changing interpreting practices. Interpreters should strive to increase their awareness and expand their bilingual vocabulary through daily practice with simulated interpreting tasks.

Upon reflecting on this interpreting activity, the interpreter has identified four aspects that need improvement for future endeavors. Firstly, there is a need to enhance listening comprehension abilities. The interpreter often resorts to a literal interpretation due to the prevalence of colloquial expressions and fragmented sentence structures in impromptu speech, but this approach may not be suitable for all interpretations. She needs to reorganize the sentences. Secondly, there is room for improvement in shorthand skills. As some specialized terms were not accurately recorded, she paused several times during interpretation. For example, she had difficulty translating the name “Huntington”. Thirdly, she needs to cultivate perseverance and acquire extensive encyclopedic knowledge. This is crucial to avoid transmitting incorrect information to listeners. Lastly, when encountering difficult sentences, the interpreter should remain calm and composed, and quickly grasp the core meaning intended by

the speaker.

4. Conclusion

In summary, this paper analyzes the interpreting cases from Yu’s speech regarding grammatical cohesion devices, including reference, ellipsis, conjunction, substitution, and lexical cohesion devices, such as synonymy and hyponymy. Interpreting is a complex bilingual task that requires the use of interdisciplinary studies for guidance. For example, it can benefit from the relevant theory of cohesion in functional linguistics to conduct in-depth analysis between the source and the target language. The use of cohesion theory contributes to the development of a sophisticated semantic system and the establishment of coherence. As a special functional strategy, grammatical and lexical cohesion plays a crucial role in clarifying contextual meaning and making renditions more natural and fluent. In addition, the interpreter employs typical strategies such as amplification and the principle of syntactic linearity to accurately elucidate logical relationships between words and sentences.

Interpreters serve as bridges between speakers of the source language and listeners of the target language. Therefore, interpreters should use suitable cohesion devices and other interpreting strategies to meet the evaluation criteria of consecutive interpreting, convey the correct meanings of speakers, and achieve equivalence between the source language and the target text.

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