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Study on the E-C interpretation of the Government Work Report under the Guidance of Interpretive Theory

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Abstract: With the deepening of globalization and advancement in China's international status, an increasing number of countries want to know more about China. During the exchanges with the rest of world, the government work report, as an important way of releasing information, is favored by domestic and foreign press. Thus, the writer thinks it's necessary to study the government work report and explore its interpreting strategies. This thesis firstly introduces the origin and development of the Interpretive Theory. In the meantime, it also makes a discussion about the interpretive level, subject and process. On the basis of the Interpretive Theory, this thesis makes a detailed introduction of features of the press conference interpreting from two aspects—language and content and analyzes the causes for interpreting difficulty. Finally, the author provides coping strategies against interpreting difficulty: information processing, interpretation, adjustment of the sentence structure, and literal translation.

Keywords: Government Work Report; Interpretive Theory; Interpreting Difficulty; Interpreting Strategy.

1. Introduction

With the rapid progress of the globalization, intercultural exchanges are more frequent than ever in various fields, such as global economy, science and technology, environment, politics and culture etc. Unavoidably, China is also involved in this powerful current and has greatly contributed to globalization. In 2008, China resoundingly held the world-known Olympic Games. Two years later, China again held an international event – The Shanghai World Exposition. Besides, China also actively participated in many international conferences and forums such as G20 Summit, Boao Forum for Asia and the Davos Forum. All those have fully displayed China's success and international status. Under such circumstances, an increasing number of foreign journalists and ordinary people are willing to know more about China. To do this, they pay more attention to Chinese events, especially the annual government work report, because many Chinese policies and plans will be included.

The central government's work report embodies the past development and plans on a state level. Also, as a big part of the country, every province has its government work report. In this thesis, the author will take the Jiangsu Provincial Government Work Report as an example, based upon the interpretation practice, deeply analyzing the language features and paying special attention to the difficulties that occurred in the process and the specific strategies to deal with the difficulties.

The government report mainly consists of two parts. The first part is the review of the work last year, and the second is the work plan for the next year. There are mainly two reasons for choosing this government work report as the interpretation research object. First, as one of the political literary form, the government work report has a concise text featuring clear structure and rigorous logic. Besides, it also covers different aspects like the economy, politics, culture, etc. In the process of interpretation, it will help us to build a habit of clear and logic expression. Secondly, according to the findings of the author, few scholars are focusing on the interpretation study of the government work report. The material of this thesis also does not have any related study and official translation.

2. Basic Views of the Interpretive Theory

The core idea of the Interpretive Theory is the sense behind the language. The object of the interpreter's comprehension, interpretation and expression is not the form of the source language, but the sense and thought that the speaker wants to convey. The central task for interpreter is to achieve de-verbalization and grasp the substantive sense. The Paris School unfolds the thought by expounding a series of basic views.

2.1. Interpreting Level

Interpreting would rest on as many levels as the language system has (Seleskovitch, 1990). According to linguistics, the Paris School holds the view that the language could be divided into three levels: langue (language in a narrow sense), la parole(language in use) and discourse. Based on the division of language, the interpreting was also defined as three levels which were lexical level, parole level and discourse. The lexical level interpreting, which pursues the basic correspondence of each word, is the lowest level in interpreting. It only conveys the fragmented information and always ignores the relations within the language. When the interpreters only interpret the semantic information unaffiliated with the specific speeches and communicative context, it is called parole level interpreting. Sometimes, this kind of interpreting may cause the misunderstanding of the source speeches. The discourse level's interpreting aims to connect the semantic significations, the specific communicative environment and background information. Interpreting on discourse level is the interpreting in real sense because it not only requires the interpreter to know lexical meaning of the speeches but also connects the context and cognitive information. The Paris School believes the lexical and parole level of interpreting belongs to the linguistic level of interpreting (traduction lingusitique) or transcoding

(transcodage) , while only interpreting based on discourse could well convey the meaning of the source language.

2.2. Interpreting Subject

We should know the subject of interpreting to better understand the Interpretive Theory. The subject of translation is the message conveyed, and the meaning or sense, not the language itself. Thus, the interpreting is not simply conveying the language, but the language with cognitive context. The Paris School thinks that when interpreting happens, the language shell falls off and only the sense leaves in the brain. This process is called de-verbalization in the interpretive theory which is the most important part in interpreting. Painters draw pictures following what they see in their eyes and what they get in their mind, while photographers take everything mechanically into pictures (Seleskovitch, 1978, pp. 13-15). Interpreting is like painting. Words cannot be interpreted rigidly into another language while the sense can, so the subject of the Interpretive Theory is the sense behind the language.

2.3. Interpreting Process

Traditional theory thought the interpreting process could be divided into two parts—comprehension and expression-which was highly accepted then. However, the Paris School regarded interpreting as a communicative activity and a process based on sense comprehension and expression. Amid the comprehension and expression, there was another form of activity—de verbalization. With regard to the de-verbalization, the Paris School held the opinion that when an interpreter received verbal signals, what he remembered was not the language itself, but the deeper sense behind the language, then the sense of the language reserved in the brain in a kind of non-verbal form. When he was interpreting the source language, the sense of the speech went through a stage of reorganization combined with cognitive context. Then the interpreter transferred the sense into the target language. This was an unconscious process which the interpreter hardly noticed, but it truly helped the interpreter to interpret.

3. Features of the Government Work Report

To better interpret the government work report, we first must know the basic features of the report. As the author have studied the report, there are six features as follows.

3.1. Instantaneousness and Nonrepeatability

The conference interpreting is a very official occasion. Leaders in the government are gathering here to deliberate the work report. However, since there is no rehearsal for the conference, the problems and issues that arose are random and unpredictable. Sometimes, the problems may be harsh, for example, questions with regard to the social malignant events. Sometimes, it may relate to a recent economic policy or movement like supply-side reform. Under such solemn circumstances, the speeches by the officials are all spoken once only. Since interpreting is based upon just one-time expression of the source language from the speaker. Meanwhile, the target language will be interpreted when the speaker closes his speech. In order to make the information conveyed among the communicative participants in time, the interpreter must accomplish the process of comprehension and expression in a very limited time range. The interpreter does not have sufficient time to figure out the speech and polishing on the translation. During the interpreting process, the language's input, processing, and output all happen and should be accomplished in a very short period.

As a communicative bridge between the audience and the spokesman, the interpreter must take records of all the information, organize the target language and interpret immediately. Once he starts interpreting, the content can't be changed or replenished. Besides, the spokesman explains the question comprehensively to make the speech clear. Sometimes, it may take several minutes for him to finish the speech, so it is impossible to repeat the whole speech one more time if the interpreter gets confused in the middle. Otherwise, the whole fluency of the interpreting will be interrupted and people may doubt the interpreter's ability. Because of the particularity of the conference interpreting, the leader may come from different city in China. Thus, some of their pronunciation and intonation may differ from standard mandarin and are sometimes difficult to understand. This poses an even higher requirement for the interpreter to improve the listening ability for different dialects.

3.2. High Sense of Political Sensitivity

As we all know, the spokesman in the conference are top leaders in the government, it is natural for them to be involved issues about politics. To some extent, political issues are always dangerous but highly related to the interests of our country. Since the spokesman is the government's representative, his words are official and authoritative.

Political sensitivity is a special ability for everyone in the country. The sense of the political sensitivity enables us to better understand the state policies carried out by the Party and the country, then combine with our own condition and apply them to work and life. Measuring the quality of Party members and cadres is an important standard. Nowadays, our country attaches great importance to the training of the political sensitivity of the state officials because it’s directly related to the country's political development.

On many occasions, the interpreter will be confronted with political issues. Like the government report, many of the issues are related to politics. Therefore, during the interpreting, the interpreter must possess a high sense of political sensitivity to choose the words of the interpreting to defend the interests of our country.

To strengthen our sensibility, we should firstly enhance our patriotism. We should observe the world from a relatively wider perspective, improving our scientific judgment of the domestic and international political situation. Furthermore, we should better understand the deepening changes in the world and comprehend the development trend of the world multipolarization, economic globalization and the advanced science and technology. Secondly, political sensitivity needs the support of the political theories. We should study the Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, and the Important Thought of Three Represents to know the quintessence in these theories. Moreover, we should form a political habit of knowing the policies and guidelines formulated by the Party and the nation, and understand the political thought behind the state affairs. Moreover, we should see through the appearance to perceive the essence, applying the ability to the practice of work because practice is the sole criterion for testing truth.

3.3. Timeliness

Usually, latest issues related to politics, economy, culture and diplomacy will be involved in the government work report. Spokesman will deliver his speech about the development and solutions of the current affairs. Most of the topics are keeping close pace with the times. The government will provide with the first information. For example, many domestic journalists care much about the economic condition and they want to know government's next moves. If you have watched the government work report before, you may know that economic questions are of great importance in the government work report. As many economic problems may gradually become financial problems, many people want to know the main cause of the economic volatility, what steps will Chinese government take to solve the problems, and whether the volatility will influence the reform of the economy broadly. From this, we can see how important the timeliness is for the issues in the press conference.

3.4. Authority and Formality

The government work report serves as a platform for the Chinese government to take a stand, comment on current affairs and release new policies. For the foreign countries in the world, the report is a good channel for them to know China's movements and actions. Since the spokesman is always the top leader in the government, their words are highly credible and views on the questions will represent China. Since it is a state-level conference, the suit and position they sit are all under thoughtful arrangement. If you have watched the government work report before, you may know that the spokesperson's speaking manner is more like in a written form rather than a colloquial style. It demonstrates the seriousness and formality of the press conference. When it comes to specific questions, especially for economic questions, the spokesman will use specific numbers to guarantee the accuracy of facts. Besides, their expressions are always full of diplomatic parlance, so the words used in the speeches are always formal and concise. To keep the accuracy of the speeches, the interpreter should also translate them into formal forms to avoid misunderstanding and keep the seriousness of the speech.

4. Case Study

From chapter three, we know the interpreting difficulty's classifications and causes. In this chapter, based on the mocking interpreting of Jiangsu provincial government work report held in 2017, the author will make a concrete analysis of the interpreting strategies with the guidance of the Interpretive Theory. Through the mock interpreting of the work report, this thesis summarizes four specific strategies coping with the interpreting difficulty based on the Interpretive Theory: information processing, interpretation, sentence structure adjustment and literal translation.

4.1. Information Analysis

As one of the official documents, the government work report is written in formal style. Sometimes, the drafter of the report will use phrases with the repetitive meaning to emphasize the government's determination to carry out some policies or deal with some official affairs. As a job stressing high efficiency, the interpreter doesn't have much time for consideration like a translator. If he spends too much time on sentences with same meaning, it will be a waste of time. In this case, the information processing can address the problem. Information processing means the interpreter should be aware of improving the discourse while keeping the same meaning as the original speech. If the speaker gives too much superfluous information, the interpreter should refine it.

On the contrary, if the speaker ignores some important information, the interpreter should also replenish in the interpreting. Besides, when confronted with unclear discourse, the interpreter should generalize the main idea and present it in the interpreting. Last but not least, the interpreter cannot change the main idea of the discourse at will. Anything changed in the main idea will not be called interpreting.

For example, when the governor mentions the macro-control policy and the economic operation, he makes a discourse as follows:

We have earnestly implemented national macro-control policy by making strategies to the targeted issues. As a result, progress has been achieved and stability ensured in economic operation.

In this sentence, there are two four-character structures and three repetitive words. For example, in the first sentence, the two four-character structures are not easy to interpret because four-character structures always contain profound meaning and they can be interpreted into two independent sentences. But in this sentence, it is not appropriate to interpret the two four-character structures into two sentences. Firstly, the focus of the whole sentence is the stability in economic operation. The "targeted policy" and "precise force" are only the movements of the policy to ensure the stability in economy. Therefore, paying much attention to interpreting the two structures will be wasting time for the later interpreting. Besides, there are three repetitive words "stable" in the last sentence. "Stable" means stability in English. In Chinese, it's a good writing to use the same words to emphasize something. However, it will be redundant in English if the author interprets them all. Therefore, after processing the information, the author only interprets one stability and leaves out the other two without changing the original meaning.

4.2. Adjustment of the Sentence Structure

The representative of the Interpretive Theory Seleskovitch made a metaphor for interpreting. She believes that the French-English interpreting is like unraveling a sweater of French style and then re-knitting it into one of English style. The same thing also happens to the interpreting between Chinese and English. Chinese and English have their way of organizing sentences. Taking a in-depth analysis of Chinese sentence or speeches, it's easy to know that Chinese people like to put the focus in the end of a sentence, while put the secondary information in the front as a steppingstone. However, in English, it's always the most important information that appears in the beginning of one sentence, then the secondary information. Due to the differences of sentence structure, the interpreter should change the sequence of the information and adjust to the expression of each language. Literary interpreting of the source language sometimes makes the sentence tedious and redundant. To make it more balanced and logically clear, the interpreter should adopt the strategy of sentence structure adjustment.

The quality of basic education has promoted and educational equality has made new progress by carrying out comprehensive reforms. The real economy lays a significant foundation for our province's economic and social development because it takes up 80% of the economic

aggregate. To make it more understandable, the author integrates all the information and reorganizes the discourse's logic relation. English speakers always make a statement of the fact, then explain the reasons according to the fact. From the interpreting, the author also gives the fact first, then lists the reason. This accords with the habit of English speakers. The clear and logical interpreting is also easy for them to grasp the key point in the speech.

4.3. Literal Interpreting

Literal translation means that when the interpreter translates one sentence, he will keep the content and form of the target language just as the source language. Sometimes, the spokesman will make a metaphor to convey his idea vividly. On this occasion, the metaphor's form and imagery are of great significance. Therefore, it is better to interpret it the same as the source language. Only by this, the original sense could be conveyed. Under such circumstance, the interpreter should firstly give an interpretation of the sentence then interpret it literally.

Great efforts will be made to promote the ecological civilization construction and improve ecological environment. We will firmly set up the green development idea which green hills and clear waters are the gold and silver mines and fulfill our responsibility on supervision and rectification work from the central government.

We will actively dispose of the zombie enterprises and fulfill the responsibilities on arranging jobs for laid-off workers.

“Clear waters and green mountains are as good as mountains of gold and silver” is a sentence by President Xi. He made a metaphor by comparing the beautiful scenery to the valuable treasure to remind us of protecting the environment. Therefore, the author doesn’t change anything in the target language to better keep the image. In the second example, “Zombie enterprise” means companies saved by governmental support from bankruptcy. If we paraphrase the zombie enterprises, it may lose the original style. Besides, the zombie enterprise is easy for people to understand the meaning behind the language.

5. Conclusion

From the perspective of the Interpretive Theory, this thesis conducted preliminary research on the government work report interpreting based on author's practice and interpreting of the Jiangsu provincial government work report in 2017. Through the analysis, this thesis summarizes the classification and causes of interpreting difficulty. Based on these difficulties, it also provides coping strategies which are information processing, interpretation, sentence structure adjustment and literal translation.

The Paris School holds the view that interpreting that the subject of translation is the message conveyed, and the meaning or sense, not the language itself. Therefore, according to the interpretive theory, the information should be reorganized after de verbalization, then grasp the sense behind the language level in mind, finally interpret it according to the habit of the target language to achieve the aim of cross-language communications. Guide by this theory, the author analyzed the four strategies by presenting examples of each strategy. When the speaker made redundant and repetitive discourse, the interpreter should process the information and properly delete the repeated parts. Sometimes, when the discourse made by speaker is not clear in logic, the interpreter should also process the information, then generalize it and reorganize the whole sentence to make it short and clear. When cultural-loaded words or phrases appear, the interpretation strategy should be adopted because sometimes it’s hard for the interpreter to find the corresponding expression in the target language. Under such circumstances, if the form can’t be kept, the interpreter should get rid of the frame of the source language and grasp the meaning of it, then interpret it in an understandable way for the audience. In addition, the author also made a little comparison about the sentence structure between English and Chinese. And based on that, the thesis introduces the strategy of adjustment of the sentence structure. Due to the great differences between the two languages, the interpreter should flexibly reorganize the sentence structure and present the interpreting in various form based on sense.

At last, the thesis provides a basic interpreting skill: literal translation. Sometimes, the sentence's content is easy to get across to the audience though there are many imageries in it. In other cases, the meaning has been explained before and the latter part is just for comparison. For that, the interpreter could keep the original form and imagery to ensure the complete information could be conveyed.

However, there are still limitations in the thesis. Owing to the limitation of material and inadequate of theoretical basis, the author can’t make a comprehensive summary of all the interpreting strategies. However, interpreting strategy only serves as a guidance to the practice. The interpreter can’t just rigidly adhere to the strategies, however, he should make flexible changes of different strategies to improve the interpreting. Furthermore, the interpretive theory is a profound theoretical basis from plentiful conference interpreting, therefore, it will pose a guiding effect on the interpreting. The interpreter should internalize it for interpreting, but it needs a long time of practice.

With China’s peaceful rising, more and more countries in the world will try to know about China and establish exchanges with China. The government work report interpreting will also receive more attentions as one of the windows to the outside world. As an important interpreting form, the government work report interpreting needs more attention and researches. Under the guidance of the Interpretive Theory, the author has made a preliminary study about it. The author hopes this thesis could give some aspiration to the research of the Interpretive Theory and expect that more researchers can join in the team to make interpreting better achieve its aim for inter-lingual communications.

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