

Application of Equivalence Theory in E-C Translation of Business Correspondence

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Abstract

Business correspondence is the most important written communication tool for international trade communication, and it is also an effective communication tool for businesses and customers around the world to contact business and conduct business communication. Business correspondences often involve the communication purpose and economic interests of both import and export parties. The excellent translation of business correspondences can maximize the communication purpose and economic interests of both sides of business transactions, so the correct and effective translation of business correspondences by translators is particularly important. There are many kinds of business correspondences. Based on the equivalence theory, I will explore how to complete the translation of business correspondences, and properly reflect the real information of the source language in terms of tone and content.

Keywords

Business correspondence; International trade; Translation; Equivalence theory.

1. Introduction

The world has developed into a closely connected entity, and trade cooperation between countries has become more and more extensive. Business correspondences play a more and more important role in international trade. Therefore, it is very important for translators to do well in the translation of business correspondences.

It's not easy to translate business correspondences. So the following chapter will talk about how to do translation well under the application of equivalence theory.

2. Literature Review

When it comes to the theory of equivalent translation, what I must mention is that Nida, an American translator, published a preliminary study of translation science in 1964. His main contribution is to put forward "dynamic equivalence", that is, "the relationship between the recipient of the translation and the information of the translation should be basically the same as that between the recipient of the original and the information of the original." (Nida, 1964) and make use of the principle of information theory, which shows that the receiving channel of the target language receiver is different from that of the original language receiver, and the speech that conforms to the original language law but does not conform to the language law cannot or is difficult to pass through, so the target language cannot or is difficult to complete the task of information transmission.

Another translator I want to mention here is Mona Baker. I have learnt that she proposes a bottom-up translation equivalence method: from easy to difficult, from the equivalence of words in translation, through the collocation of words and phrases, the alignment of sentences, to the equivalence of texts this semester in the course conducted by Professor Song.

Zhang Huisong(Zhang, 2002, p79)considers that international English business correspondences have their own features and there are differences between English and Chinese language. He puts forward “faithfulness” and “smoothness” as the basic translation principles in this style. I agree with his ideas to some extent. There are still some aspects should be considered on translation of BLs.

Wang Fanglu(Wang, 2005, p46) pointed out the method of “Near writings in classical Chinese” when translating English business correspondences to Chinese, such as translate “you” to“贵方的”, “ has been booked” to“定妥”, “sincerely” to“谨上”.I think this principle is definitely true in practice of translation.

The formal translating theories on translation business correspondences are often focusing on languages itself, but not the true usage in the real life. I think translators above neglect the research on the function and pragmatic purpose of language, so they fail to grasp the linguistic features of letters as a whole, and cannot explain the usage of letter language in theory. From the above translation theories of domestic and foreign scholars and translators on business correspondences, I would like to put forward the application of equivalent translation method in E-C translation of business correspondences.

3. Characteristics of Business Correspondence and Difficulties to Translate it

3.1. Characteristics

Business correspondences are formal official documents, which are written in a correct way, with words, and generally abide by the writing principles of business English. Business correspondences are generally euphemistic, polite and tactful, and they often use the common official forms in Chinese.

On the other hand, the business correspondence concentrates on the 7 principles, and they are correctness, concreteness, conciseness, courtesy, clearness, consideration, and completeness. (Wang, 2008, p183)

3.2. Difficulties in Translation of Business Correspondence

The characteristics of business correspondence decide the difficulties in translation of business correspondence.

Under the context of that Business correspondences are generally euphemistic, polite and tactful, and they often use the common official forms in Chinese, we should pay attention to strategy even when expressing dissatisfaction or accountability. When translating, we should try to reproduce the tone and style of the original text according to the relevant business background.

What’s more, when translating business correspondences, we should try to be precise, concise and not neglect the details to ensure the target text we have made obey the 7 principles too.

4. Translation Methods in Business Correspondence

4.1. The Goal of Business Correspondence

Before my talking about the translation method, I think it is necessary to get to know the final goal of translation for business correspondence.

Firstly, the translation we do should be faithful to the original text. Owing to the crucial role of business correspondence in international trade, the translation should express the true intention of the writer’s purpose.

The second goal, which is very important, is that the target text has the same or similar tone and style of the original text.

With the goal we need to achieve, I will talk about translation methods next.

4.2. Translation Methods

4.2.1. Literal Translation

Literal translation refers to translating the original meaning of the original sentence and maintaining the original stylistic form, including the original structure and rhetoric of the original sentence, so that the target language readers can easily and happily understand the true meaning of the original text.(Gao & Li, 2008,p263)

Example 1:

ST: If you would like to set up an appointment during non-exhibit hall hours, please call me. (Lian Jie, 2016, p216)

TT: 如贵方愿安排于非展出时间面谈, 烦请电复。(Lian Jie, 2016, p216)

Analysis: This sentence usually appears at the end of a business correspondence. There are many humble and respectful words in Chinese. For example, “令尊” in Chinese is “your father” in English, while “贱内” in Chinese is “my wife” in English. The example above reflects the courtesy and respect of the sender to the receiver in China. In order to make the addressee feel the politeness of the addresser and ensure the smooth progress of business activities, the translator should translate the Chinese business correspondences directly according to their linguistic characteristics. In a word, when encountering pronouns in E-C translation of business correspondence including you or me, we should use the method of literal translation.

Example2:

ST: As soon as you tell us the number of parts you will need, we will scheduled there production immediately. (Wang, 2008, p184)

TT: 一旦收到你方所需零件号, 当即安排生产。(Wang, 2008, p184)

Analysis: This sentence was the promise that the writer made. The method of literal translation will make the reader (sometimes the partner) feel the sincerity of cooperation from the writer. The word “当即” also let the reader think that the writer whose company is very effective and reliable.

4.2.2. Free Translation

Free translation means that on the basis of respecting the meaning of the original text and not pondering over the details, translation will be smooth and natural. Free translation does not need to pay attention to the form of the original text, including the structure and rhetoric of the original text. However, free translation does not mean deleting or adding the content of the original text. (Gao & Li, 2008, p263) In translation, the original text must be carefully considered, the key points emphasized in the original text must be grasped, and the style and features of the original text must be presented to the readers. Free translation is a technology. To translate accurately, one must understand the culture of the source language and the target language, and one must have extensive knowledge.

Example 1:

ST: For proper coverage in the directory, you ought to appear in more than one category. (Lian Jie, 2016, p216)

TT: 为取得良好的宣传效果, 贵公司宜考虑在不同类别中刊登广告。(Lian Jie, 2016, p216)

Analysis: In the original text, in order to make the receiver understand the sender's intention accurately, the translator should adopt free translation method in combination with Chinese

expression habits. If we translate “more than” directly, maybe it will make the reader feel confused.

Example 2:

ST: This offer is firm subject to your immediate reply which should reach us not later than the end of this month. There is little likelihood of the goods unsold once this particular offer has lapsed. (Wang, 2008, p184)

TT: 以上实盘，本月底前复到我方有效。一旦本盘过期，货物可能即将售出。(Wang, 2008, p184)

Analysis: This sentence consists of terms such as “lapse” “offer”. It occurred to me that when we translate the business correspondence, we should be alert to the terms and transmit the true message to the reader to achieve the prospect effect. The application of the free translation in this sentence is the way of translating the underlined phrase. The phrase “is little likelihood of the goods unsold” maybe hard for us to understand owing to the words including “little” and “unsold”. If we translate it literally, the reader will feel confused. So the method of free translation will solve this problem and help the reader easy to understand what the sentence truly refers.

4.2.3. Conversion of Word Classes

Example:

ST: It would also be most helpful if we could occasionally bring a client to look at your hotel. (Lian Jie, 2016, p216)

TT: 如获允许本公司陪同客户前来参观贵饭店的装修，对本公司定有莫大帮助。(Lian Jie, 2016, p216)

Analysis: In order to let the addressee know the exact intention of the addresser, the translator should translate the adverb “most” into the adjective “great” by combining the expression habit of Chinese and adopting the method of part of speech transformation.

4.2.4. Conversion of Voice

Example:

ST: Please note that the 200 machine tools you order on September 15 will be dispatched tomorrow by rail to San Francisco for shipment by s.s. Sichuan, which leaves for Shanghai on October 28. (Wang, 2008, p183)

TT: 请注意：你9月15日所订200台机床将于明日运往旧金山装“四川号”轮。该轮定于10月28日由此驶往上海。(Wang, 2008, p183)

Analysis: Mona Baker claims that the fact that the passive can and often does communicate adverse meanings in languages such as Japanese and Chinese must be borne in mind by translators working from or into these languages. Translators should replace a large number of English passive structures with active structures in their target texts in order to avoid negative connotations. At the business correspondence, it is common to encounter passive voice, so we should deal with it by conversion of voice.

5. Conclusion

Business correspondences play a more and more important role in international exchange. The translation of business letters is no longer just the pursuit of equivalence in words, words, sentences and even texts, but also the pursuit of equivalence in effects. Only in this way can we really play the role of business correspondences.

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