

Study on the Explicitation Strategy of Professional Interpreters in Chinese-English Foreign Affairs Consecutive Interpretation

-- A Case Study on the Premier Li keqiang's Press Conference in 2019

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Abstract

The concept of explicitation was first proposed by French scholars Vinay and Darbelnet in 1958. In recent years, scholars at home and abroad have done a lot of researches on the case study and corpus investigation about explicitation. This thesis reviews previous studies on explicitation and analyses the interpretation of premier Li keqiang's speech at the press conference in 2019. In foreign affairs interpretation, speakers and audiences are likely to have different cultural backgrounds and different understandings for the same things. Interpreters often need to manifest the target language, so that audience can better understand the speaker's intention and views. If interpreter only convey the superficial meaning of the text or interpret the source language word-for-word, this interpretation do not correspond with the original meaning. Therefore, it is essential to research the importance of explicitation in interpretation. This paper studies the explicitation of foreign affairs interpretation by means of discourse analysis from three aspects, including obligatory explicitation, optional explicitation, and pragmatic explicitation, aiming to provide some references for the indepth study of the explicitation of foreign affairs interpretation. The research finds that explicitation can make the logic and meaning of the target language clearer, so that the target audience can understand the content of the source language more accurately. Therefore, new interpreters can learn explicitation strategies from professional interpreters to know how to take into account the linguistic, social and cultural differences between Chinese and English and use reasonable strategies to explain the implicit information in the source language, in order to achieve the best communicative effect.

Keywords

Chinese-English language differences; Explicitation classification; Interpretation on foreign affairs; Consecutive interpretation.

1. Introduction

1.1. Structure

This paper includes five chapters. Chapter one is introduction, which introduces the problems, methods and structure of the paper. The second chapter is literature review, explaining the status of explicitation research. The third chapter is about theory. It introduces the definition and classification of explicitation, thus providing the theoretical basis for the case study of the fourth chapter. The fourth chapter, the key part of this paper, takes premier Li keqiang's press conference in 2019 as an example to analyze the explicitation phenomenon in Chinese-English consecutive translation. Chapter five is conclusion, which summarizes the research of this paper.

1.2. Research Questions

The paper is set to study the effect of explicitation in foreign affairs interpretation on improving the quality of interpretation result. To be specific, the effect will be reflected in the following aspects: to help the audience understand proper terms, background knowledge, and concise content. The author will study specific cases of explicitation and analyze the advantages of this flexible method by comparison.

Therefore, this paper aims to discuss the following questions by analyzing the Chinese-English interpretation of premier Li keqiang's answers to journalists' questions in 2019: In the Chinese-English interpretation, whether interpretation results embodied explicitation? Is explicitation helpful in logical clarity and cohesion of the text?

1.3. Research Methods

The research method of this paper adopts discourse analysis, and the research object is the consecutive interpretation of premier Li keqiang's answers to journalists' questions in 2019. The author gathers the discourse of speakers and interpreters, and then sorts out explicitation in the Chinese to English interpretation, and tries to summarize the types of explicitation.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Literature Review in Abroad

Two French scholars, Jean Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet (1958), first proposed the term "explicitation" in their book comparative studies of French and English rhetoric. The book explains this term as a translation skill that can clarify the information implied in the source text.

Shoshana Blum Kulka (1986) proposed the famous "explicitation hypothesis", which was the first systematic study of explicitation in translation research.

Brom kulka studied explicitation through discourse analysis. By studying the target language texts of professional and non-professional translators (translation between English and French), she found that the target language texts may be longer than the source language texts. Besides, translators used cohesive ways in the interpretation process, so she believed that explicitation is an inherent attribute of translation.

Wadensjo (2002) distinguished explicitation, implication and alternative by marking more than 20 different conferences interpretation. She holds that interpretation is a communicative behavior, and discourse embodies it's meaning in the context of communicative situations. Therefore, the role of interpreters should be based on the needs of different cultural contexts.

Papai (2004) used parallel corpus and comparable corpus to examine the explicitation in terms of logic, lexical, syntactic elements. He also distinguished between explicitation as a strategy used in the process of translation and explicitation as a feature of the product of translation, with the latter being manifested in a higher degree of explicitness in translated than in non-translated texts in the same language.

2.2. Literature Review in China

Compared with foreign countries, the explicitation research in China started relatively late. However, their researches have promoted the development of explicitation in different degrees. Professor He xianbin (2003), the director of the Chinese association for comparative study of English and Chinese, takes the original text and translation of *The Last Leaf*, an American novel, as objects to explore the phenomenon of explicitation in English-Chinese translation.

Professor Zhang qifan (2009), a member of the world interpretation association (AIIC), studies the phenomenon of explicitation in Chinese-English consecutive interpretation. Based on the cultural classification model, Zhang qifan divides the explicitation in Chinese-English

consecutive interpretation into three categories: indispensable, contextual supplement and dispensable explicitation.

Tang fang and Li dechao (2013) studies explicitation based on the consecutive interpretation between professional translators and student translators. It is found that professional interpreters often express the implied intention of the speaker in the source language by means of explicitation strategies, which reduces the difficulty of understanding. However, student interpreters are confined to the notes of consecutive interpretation, and they usually adopt the strategy of explicitation to make up for their own interpretation capacity.

Wang kefei (2008) investigated the change of word numbers in translated texts of different genres and concluded that all translated texts consist of more words than the non-translated texts. Wang was convinced that explicitation might contribute to the expansion of translated texts. He suggested that explicitation not only includes the changes in language connection, but also the externalization of meaning, which refers to making explicit the logic in the translated text. Wang also found that the explicitation in translation is caused by language differences, translator preferences, social and cultural elements, etc.

Compared with the research at home and abroad, foreign scholars have started their research on explicitation earlier and achieved abundant research results. It has further confirmed that explicitation is one of the universal characteristics of translation and interpretation.

3. Explicitation Theory

3.1. Definition of Explicitation

The concept of "explicitation" was first put forward by French scholars Vinay and Daberne in 1958. According to their point of view, explicitation is a stylistic translation skill that can explicitly express the information implied in the source language. Vinay and Daberne hold that explicitation is not only caused by the grammatical differences between source language and target language, but also influenced by context or situation factors.

Brom kulka (1986), Professor of Hebrew university of Israel, proposed the "explicitation hypothesis", which is the situation that the target language texts may have more redundancy than the source language text in the process of translation. Specifically, cohesion in the target language text improved, and translator adds cohesive ways in the target language text.

Claudy and karoli (2005) define explicitation more systematically. Explicitation means that the broader meaning of the source text translates into more precise meaning. A word with complex meaning in the source language text is translated into several words in the target language text. That means new meaning appears in the target language. One sentence in the source text is translated into several sentences in the target text. Words or phrases in the source text are upgraded to clauses in the target text.

Although Scholars put forward different definitions of explicitation, in fact, explicitation means that express the implicit information from the source language.

3.2. Classification of Explicitation

Since there is no unified definition of explicitation in academic circles, scholars hold different views in classifying explicitation types. One of the most systematic, influential and widely used methods is the classification of explicitation by professor Krodi of Loran university in Hungary. According to the reasons of explicitation, Claudy (1993) divides explicitation into four categories: obligatory explicitation, optional explicitation, pragmatic explicitation and intrinsic explicitation of translation.

4. Case Study

This paper analyze the professional interpreters' consecutive interpreting at premier Li keqiang's press conference in 2019. Based on the classification of explicitation proposed by professor Claude of Loran university in Hungary, this paper classifies the explicitation in the case into three categories: obligatory explicitation, optional explicitation and pragmatic explicitation.

4.1. Obligatory Explicitation

Obligatory explicitation is generally caused by the syntactic structure differences between Chinese and English languages. To be specific, when interpret from Chinese to English, interpreter complete the missing or implied grammatical elements in Chinese to ensure that the target language conforms to English grammatical norms.

Example 1:

ST: 今年下决心要进行更大规模的减税降费，把增值税和基本养老保险单位缴费率降下来。

TT: This year we will implement larger-scale tax and fee cuts. We will make reductions in the VAT and employers' contributions to the basic pension insurance scheme.

As Chinese sentence structure is more flexible, the subject of each paragraph can be implied or omitted according to the context. But English has a rigorous subject-predicate structure, except from imperative sentence, the subject of other sentences is necessary. In order to ensure correct English grammar, translators must show the omitted subject in Chinese. Accordingly, in those two sentences, the interpreter manifests the subject "we", which guarantees that the target language conforms to the grammatical norms of English and enables that the source language content is interpreted to the target language audience accurately.

4.2. Optional Explicitation

The feature of optional explicitation is that the grammar of the target language is correct if interpreter does not manifest the information in the source language. It will not pose difficulties to the target language audience to understand. However, lacking optional explicitation may lead the target language to be less authentic, fluent and unable to reproduce the original style. Through analysis, the author finds that optional explicitation includes manifesting the implied logical relations in Chinese and manifesting the mood and standpoint of the speaker. Therefore, the author will analyze it from two aspects: logic explicitation, mood and standpoint explicitation.

4.2.1. Logical Explicitation

Logical explicitation indicates the use of appropriate words, phrases or cohesive ways to reveal the implied logical relations in the original text, so that target language audience can better understand what the speaker talked about.

Example 2:

ST: 中国适度调低经济增长预期目标，用的是区间调控的方式，既和去年经济增速相衔接，也表明我们不会让经济运行滑出合理区间，可以说给市场发出的是稳定的信号。

TT: We have adjusted downward, as appropriate, our projected economic growth target for 2019, and set it at a target range. This is compatible with the GDP growth rate we achieved last year. It is also consistent with our determination to prevent major economic indicators from sliding out of the proper range. By this way, we have sent a message of stability to the market.

In Chinese, logical relations are often expressed through discourse meaning, while English emphasizes explicit cohesion. Therefore, after grasping the overall meaning and internal logic of the paragraph, interpreter adds the conjunctive "By this way" to show the progressive relations implied in the original text when translate the last sentence of Chinese.

4.2.2. Mood and Standpoint Explicitation

The mood explicitation talks about expressing the speaker's tone, attitude or standpoint in the target language in a more obvious way. General speaking, omitting this explicitation, translators will not cause much difficulty for audience to understand the target language.

Example 3:

ST: 监管要把规则公开透明, 让被监管者知道自己该做什么、不该做什么。监管不能搞选择性监管、任性监管。要形成一种放和管结合的有效性的制度性安排。

TT: We must make the rules open and transparent, so that market players are fully aware of the dos and don'ts. We must not exercise selective or arbitrary regulation. We must put in place effective institutional arrangements for both deregulation and oversight.

It is not easy to understand the strong tone of premier Li keqiang from this sentence. Chinese audience could sense the resolute attitude from premier Li keqiang's speech. Hence, as interpreter adds "must" to the sentence, the tone and standpoint of the speech is expressed more clearly so that foreign audiences can sense the tone and attitude of premier Li keqiang too and understand the message what the premier wants to convey.

4.3. Pragmatic Explicitation

According to professor Claudy, pragmatic explicitation is caused by cultural differences between different languages. Malinowski's theory believes that the general context consists of cultural context and Contextual context. Communication cannot be separated from specific Contextual context. For some words have different meanings in different contexts, translators often need to manifest the contextual information that is implicit or unfamiliar to the target audience. Therefore, based on the views of Claude and Malinowski, the author further divides pragmatic explicitation into Contextual information and cultural information.

4.3.1. Contextual Information Explicitation

Contextual information explicitation means that interpreter express the speaker's implied information clearly according to the specific situation of the speech. That will help the target language audience easy to understand the content.

Example 4:

ST: 现在可以说是真金白银已经备好了, 有关部门和各级政府都要去落实, 决不能让政策“打白条”。

TT: So, these heavyweight policies and measures are all set, relevant departments and governments at all levels must fully deliver those policies and measures. There must be no lip service.

According to the context, Chinese audiences can accurately understand the deep meaning of the word "real money and silver" according to the context of premier Li keqiang's speech. But for foreign audiences, it is difficult for English listeners to understand the meaning of this sentence unless professional interpreter interprets it into heavyweight policies.

Example 5:

ST: 我们是给制造业等基础行业、给带动就业面最大的中小企业明显减税, 这实际上是“放水养鱼”、培育财源。

TT: We are going to cut VAT rates for the manufacturing and other basic sectors. And we are going to make things much easier for small and medium-sized companies, the largest providers of jobs in our country. They will see their taxes meaningfully reduced. This will create a more enabling environment for companies, and also help to expand our tax sources.

When journalist asked the question about the Chinese government took a series of steps to reduce taxes and fees. Mr. premier said “draw off water to breed fish”, but, in this context, the

superficial meaning is not acceptable. In fact, it means that the government wants to cultivate a sound environment for companies by cutting taxes. In this specific situation, Interpreter used a strategy of free translation to express Mr. Premier's real meaning.

4.3.2. Cultural Information Explication

Cultural information explication requires that translators need to convey the rich connotation of words or sentences with cultural background in the source language to the target language audience. In the consecutive Chinese-English interpretation, it is mainly reflected in the translation of expressions with Chinese characteristics, including Chinese poetry, idioms and sayings, as well as words with Chinese economic, political and social characteristics.

Example 6:

ST: 大规模减税降费, 是要动政府的存量利益, 要割自己的肉。所以我说这是一项刀刃向内、壮士断腕的改革。

TT: Digging into the government's own revenue stock for slashing taxes and fees would be like the government turning the blade of a knife to itself, which requires significant self-sacrifice. That is why I said this is a key reform that requires exceptional courage and determination.

The strong man's wrist originally indicates that the warrior's wrist is bitten by a snake who immediately cut off wrist, to prevent the spread of snake venom. Later, the metaphor means that work resolutely without any hesitation. Premier Li keqiang used this idiom to show the Chinese government's firm determination to reform. Since foreign audiences do not know the idiom "a strong man cuts his wrist", and the interpretation time is limited, the interpreter cannot explain the origin and development of this idiom to foreign audiences in detail. Therefore, interpreter adopts the strategy of free translation, not pursuing the superficial correspondence of literal forms, but expressing the implied meanings to the target audiences. The target audience can understand the content of the speech quickly and realize the firm determination of the Chinese government to reform.

Example 7:

ST: 就是要把能用的十八般武艺都用起来, 巩固中俄经贸规模突破1000亿美元的成果, 而且向翻番的目标迈进。

TT: In a word, we need to make use of all possible means at our disposal to, first, keep our 100-billion-dollar trade stable, and then, work further toward the goal of doubling it.

When premier Li keqiang talk about China-Russia relationship, he used a phrase with strong Chinese feature. "Skill in wielding the 18 kinds of weapons" is a traditional term of Chinese martial arts, and also known as "eighteen kinds of weapons". It is often appeared in ancient Chinese novel or Chinese opera, a kind of skill or kung fu using the 18 kinds of weapons. But it represents "all possible means" in this sentence, so interpreter must express the implicit cultural information, if not, foreign audience can't understand its profound meaning.

5. Conclusion

Since the concept of "explication" comes into existence, scholars have put up different definitions and classification methods about explication. By summarizing the views of predecessors, the author believes that explication, based on the deverbilization, is an important skill in interpretation. It is very crucial to ensure the accuracy of conveying speaker's intention and information, the fluency of language expression and the acceptability of audience. To improve the quality of interpretation, interpreters should be flexible with the source language and use explication methods appropriately.

In this paper, premier Li keqiang's press conference in 2019 is selected as corpus, and the phenomenon of explication in Chinese-English consecutive translation is studied based on

professor Krawdy's explicitation classification and social anthropologist Malinowski's theory. By analyzing professional interpreter's interpretation in foreign affairs, it can be found that: First, there is explicitation phenomenon in the Chinese-English consecutive interpretation. Owing to linguistic, social and cultural differences between Chinese and English, and different speech occasions, interpreters need to express the implicit verbal and non-verbal Chinese information clearly, so that English audiences can understand the speech more accurately. Second, this paper classifies the explicitation into three categories: obligatory explicitation, optional explicitation and pragmatic explicitation. Successfully, these explicitations can help to clarify the logic and meaning of the context. The interpretation selected by premier Li keqiang at the press conference in this paper belongs to foreign affairs interpretation and is translated by professional interpreters, which is also conducive to the study of interpreting learners. Besides, future researchers can adopt more in-depth research on the phenomenon of interpretation explicitation about foreign affairs.

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