

A Corpus-Based Study on Explicitation of Conjunctions in Chinese-English Interpreting

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ABSTRACT. *Based on data from learner-generated corpus, this paper examines the explicitation of conjunctions in a Chinese-English interpreting test among undergraduate students from a quantitative approach. The result shows convincing evidences of explication in the interpreted texts and a majority of cases are regarded as strategics choice and hence welcomed. Furthermore, the frequency of explication is proved to be proportional to competence of tested subjects.*

KEYWORDS: *Explicitation, Conjunctions, Corpus, Interpreter competence*

1. Introduction

Explicitation is considered as a translation universal by scholars in translation studies worldwide, and there are many related literatures that collectively define explicitation as a process in which the implicit information in a source text becomes explicit. Differences in inter-language grammatical systems, habitual expressions, social and cultural divergences and personal style of individual translators are among the most common factors behind explicitation. However, most of the studies have focused on published texts, translation of official documents or work of senior professional translators while explicitation in interpretation, especially in the work of interpretation learners has long been overlooked with only a small number of published studies.

Hence, based on data from a learner-generated corpus, this study examines the frequency of explicitation of conjunctions in a undergraduate Chinese-English interpreting test from a quantitative approach. It then further explores the contributing factors resulting in explicitation, especially the correlation between explicitation and test-taker competence by analyzing text results and conducting interviews.

2. Explicitation

2.1 Definition

Explicitation is deemed as one of the translation universals. The idea was first brought about by French scholars Vinay and Darbelnet in 1958 in their article *A Methodology for Translation*, where they defined explication as “the process of introducing information into the target language which is present only implicit in the source language, but which can be derived from the context or the situation”. (Vinay&Darbelnet, 1958:342)

The British translation theorist Mona Baker further categorizes explication as one of the “universal translation features” (1996:180). Baker argues that the level of explication is evidently elevated in translated texts and translators incline to be more explicit about all the implicit information in source texts. (Baker, 1993:243; 1996:180). At the meantime, Blum-Kulka’s explication hypothesis(1986: 19), which coincides with Baker’s view, points out that, compared to the source text, a translated text tends to be more elaborative, while the explication of conjunctions is viewed as a manifestation of the said elaboration.

2.2 Classification

The classification of explication is often controversial. Vinay and Darbelnet(1958: 24) classified it into two categories: lexical explication and informative explication. This classification is yet deemed ambiguous since it obscures the causes of those categories of explication. Vinay and Darbelnet reckoned both categories could be attributed to context, while grammatical and expressional differences are more likely to be the true causes.

Hungarian scholar Kinga Klaudy classifies explication into four categories based on their causes, that is, “obligatory explication”, “optional explication”, “pragmatic explication” and “translation-inherent explication” (Klaudy,1998: 83). The first two categories are both caused by language divergences: obligatory explication is more often linked to grammatical and syntactical differences and hence is obligatory while optional explication is associated with dissimilarities in text structure and logic. Pragmatic explication, on the other hand, can be attributed to cultural differences. However, Klaudy offers very little explanation for translation-inherent explication.

Juliane House, a German translation theorist, classifies the “explicitness” in translation into two categories: obligatory and optional. (House, 2004).Optional explicitness or explication is subdivided into three types based on Halliday’s language metafunctions-”referential content”, “interpersonal relation” and “textual coherence” (House, 2004), among which “textual coherence” is made explicit by strategies like reference, substitution and adding conjunctions.

To briefly conclude, the majority of explication classifications include both obligatory and optional categories(Pym, 2005:4; Baumgarten, 2008:181-182; Frankenberg-Garcia, 2004:1), and it’s agreed that obligatory explication is often associated with grammatical divergences while optional explication tends to have more to do with differences in culture and logic and communicational and expressional features within difference languages.

2.3 Causes

In the earlier discussion, grammatical difference has been cited as a main cause for obligatory explicitation, while differences in culture and logic and communicational and expressional divergences for optional explicitation.

It's worth noticing that a psychological perspective is adopted by Englund-Dimitrova(2005) to study how interpreters use explicitation as a coping strategy for information that is hard to be processed in interpretation. Englund-Dimitrova first cites difficulty in information process as a contributing factor to explicitation, whose psychological experiment shows evidences of two types of explicitation, that is, norm- governed explicitation and strategic explicitation (Englund-Dimitrova, 2005a: 37). Information processing difficulties and incompetence of interpreters are listed causes for strategic explicitation. Blum-Kulka's(2004:31) study supports Englund-Dimitrova's view on interpreter incompetence, arguing that the less experienced and competent an interpreter is, the higher level of explicitation he/she would demonstrate. However, data from Englund-Dimitrova's experiment on Russian-Swedish interpretation show opposite results which prove that professional interpreters exhibit higher level of strategic explicitation than non-professional interpreting learners.

3. Study Methodology

3.1 Research Question and Methodology

This study examines the explicitation of conjunctions and its causes in a Chinese-English interpreting test among undergraduate students from a quantitative approach.

The data is extracted from a user-generated corpus of the English department of Tan Kah Kee College, Xiamen University. The corpus was established in 2018, and has collected over 6000 learner-generated audio files, from consecutive interpretation assignments and tests of undergraduates in the department from class 2015 to class 2018. The audio files selected for this study include 80 test audios from class 2017, collected in the final test in the spring semester of 2018-2019 academic year.

The source test material is an excerpt from the keynote speech by President Xi Jinping at the opening ceremony of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations on 19th May, 2019. It is of political nature, and is 385 words in text. Test-takers were instructed to record their interpretation based on the test audio and upload their audios to a server for later collection.

The study uses Halliday and Hasan's theory of cohesion as a theoretical reference and categorizes conjunctions accordingly in the source text into "additive", "adversative", "causal" and "temporal". (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) "Hypothetical" is added as another category given the existing conjunction of the source text. Based

on the categorization, the study further calculates the total number of conjunctions and the subtotals of each category in both source and interpreted texts. Through data analysis, the study then attempts to trace evidences of explicitation in the interpreted texts and pinpoint the causes.

3.2 Study Objects

The study objects include 80 interpretation-majored sophomores who had finished two semesters' training on interpreting skills at the time of the test. They had acquired sufficient vocabulary for basic interpreting and demonstrated acceptable comprehensive English capabilities in listening, speaking and logical analysis.

From an scale of 0-100, among the 80 test-takers, 15 scored between 60-69, 30 between 70-79 and 22 between 80-89. 6 test-takers failed by scoring under 60 while 7 scored excellently above 90.

4. Study Results and Analysis

4.1 Study Results

Table 1 below shows that, when it comes to explicit conjunctions in the source text, the majority of study objects adopt a literal approach for their interpretation. In other words, explicit conjunctions mostly remain explicit in the interpreted texts.

However, there is a distinct discrepancy in the total number of conjunctions between the source and the interpreted texts. The number in a single source text is 5, making the total 400, multiplied 80 test subjects. The number in 80 interpreted texts however, totals 734, with which 347 are considered cases of explicitation.

In terms of category, highest number of explicitation cases occurs within the category of "additive", with "and" being the most frequently used conjunction. It is followed by "causal", and "so that" appears the most time to indicate causality. "Temporary" ranks the third in number, and some test objects prefer "then" as their temporary conjunction.

4.2 Analysis

Based on the above data, it can be safely concluded that explicitation indeed occurs quite often in interpretation. Combined with interpreted text analysis and interview results, the study sums up a number of causes of explicitation.

Table 1 Conjunctions In Source and Interpreted Texts

		Interpreted texts
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category	Source text	Literal translation	Explicitation
additive	既...更(1) total:80	Not only...but also(12) In addition (18) More importantly (6) Besides(2) What's more (15) And (13) Plus(9) Subtotal: 75	and (236) in addition (33) Subtotal:269
adversative	但(1) 应该是...而不是(1) Subtotal:160	But (24) However (36) While (19) On the other hand (7) Whereas (3) Rather than (36) Instead of (28) Subtotal:153	0 Subtotal:0
causal	所以(1) Subtotal:80	So (33) Therefore (39) Thus (4) Given that (1) Consequently (2) Subtotal: 79	Therefore(14) Given that(2) So (8) So that (51) Subtotal: 75
temporal	0 Subtotal:0	0 Subtotal:0	Then (3) Subtotal:3
hypothetical	如果(1) Subtotal:80	If (80) Subtotal:80	0 Subtotal:0
Total :	400	387 734	347

4.2.1 Grammatical Differences

Grammatical differences are often associated with obligatory explicitation. As the data suggest, “and” appears 236 times in the interpreted text as an case of explicitation, which is indeed required by the English grammar which dictates the presence of “and” in the parallel structure of words, phrases and sentences. For instance:

Example 1: 亚洲近几十年快速发展, 一条十分重要的经验就是敞开大门, 主动融入世界经济发展潮流.

Interpreted Text 1: One important experience for Asia's rapid development over the past decades is that it is important to open to the outside world emerge in the trend of global economic development. (Test subject 12, score:68)

Interpreted Text 2: Decades' rapid development of Asia shows that it is important to open to the rest of the world and embrace the trend of global economic development. (Test subject 21, score 90)

Despite the lack of “和”, a Chinese additive conjunction, “and” is added between “open to the rest of the world” and “embrace the trend...”, a parallel structure to ensure grammatical accuracy in Text 2, so that the grammatical error in Text 1 can be avoided.

4.2.2 Differences in Expressions and Logic

Those differences result in the occurrence of optional explication. The study data put “in addition” as the second most frequently used conjunction in explication cases in the additive category. Yet, interestingly, the choice here is more personal and less obligatory. For instance:

Example 2: 所以, 文明交流互鉴应该是对等的, 平等的, 应该是多元的, 多向的, 而不应该是强制的, 强迫的, 不应该是单一的, 单向的. 文明永续发展, 既需要薪火相传, 代代守护, 更需要顺时应势, 推陈出新.

Interpreted Text 1: Therefore, cultural exchanges should be equal, diversified instead of forced and one-way. The continuing development of a civilization requires... (test subject 57, score 74)

Interpreted Text 2: Thus, cultural exchanges should be equal, diversified and multi-dimensional rather than coercive, imposed and one-dimensional or one-way. In addition, for a civilization to constantly develop, efforts must be made to... (test subject 34, score 94)

Text 1 is grammatically accurate, proving “in addition” is not a case of obligatory explication. However, despite the lack of additive conjunction in the Chinese source text, the two Chinese sentences form an additive relation logically, with communication and continuance of civilization being their separate topics. Hence, by explication, though being equally correct in the sense of grammar, Text 2 is better in terms of logic and cohesion.

As another frequently appearing category in conjunction explication, “causal” is often noted in the interpreted texts, with “so that” and “therefore” being the top choices for conjunctions. Those cases are often optional as well.

Example 3: ...希望各国秉持开放精神, 推进政策沟通, 设施联通, 贸易畅通, 资金融通, 民心相通, 共同构建亚洲命运共同体, 人类命运共同体.

Interpreted Text 1: ...stick to the spirit of openness and promote policy, infrastructure, money and people communications and build communities with common destiny for both Asia and the mankind. (test subject 63, score 69)

Interpreted Text 2: ...uphold openness and promote connectivity in policy, infrastructure, finance and people exchanges so that we can together build a

community with a shared future for both Asians and humanity. (test subject: 72, score 89)

Despite the accuracy in grammar, Text 1 also seems less logically coherent; while Text 2 highlights the causality between the first two clauses and the last one by explicitly adding “so that”.

In addition, Table 1 also shows a higher frequency of explicitation of certain conjunctions over others. As revealed by the data, hypothesis, adversative and temporal links are mostly explicit in the form of conjunctions in Chinese, which are therefore explicit in interpreted texts literally. However, additive and causal links tend to be implicit in Chinese, thus requiring explicitation in interpretations for the sake of coherence.

4.2.3 Interpreter Competence

Interpreter competence is listed as another causes for explicitation in the study. While Englund-Dimitrova cites it as the cause behind strategic explicitation, it has been undecided that in those cases, whether an interpreter is competent or incompetence, or whether the explicitation is welcomed or abhorred.

In this study, those cases of explicitation is grouped into two types, namely, strategic explicitation that is welcomed and explicitation caused by incompetence of interpreters. For instance:

例 4:如果各国重新回到一个个自我封闭的孤岛, 人类文明就将丧失生机活力.

Interpreted Text 1:If countries go back to become lonely islands, human civilization will lose their life and vivid energy. (test subject 50, score 66)

Interpreted Text 2:If countries choose to close their doors, human civilizations would lose their vitality. (test subject 9, score 85)

Both Text 1 and 2 show evidences of explicitation. In Text 1, “生机活力” is interpreted as “life and vivid energy” while in Text 2, “重新回到一个个自我封闭的孤岛” as “choose to close their doors”. However, examined closely, the strategic explicitation in Text 1 is more likely caused by a desperate attempt of the interpreter who was unable to provide an accurate interpretation in the limited time frame while that in Text 2 seems more like a pondered strategic choice to make the meaning in the source text more explicit and comprehensible. Therefore, the explicitation in Text 1, which is caused by interpreter incompetence is less acceptable and unwelcomed while that in Text 2, as a result of interpreter competence, is welcomed and applauded for its explicitness.

In further analysis, 347 cases of explicitation in terms of conjunction in this study are all deemed as “strategic” and “welcomed” as they are explicitation of the otherwise implicit logic links in the source text. As Table 2 shows, Test objects that scored between 80-89 demonstrate the highest number of 121 explicitation cases, while those scored below 60 the lowest of 14. Calculated in average, test takers scoring above 90 top the list averaging approximately 7.85 cases, while those fail

the test at the bottom with an average of 2.33 cases. Those figures show the frequency of explicitation is directly proportional to scores of test takers, a finding that is collaborated by separate interviews on chosen study objects about how they had made their choices on explicitation. To simply conclude, the more competent a test take is, the more cases of explicitation he/she makes as a wise and pondered strategy.

Table 2 Numbers Of Explicitation Cases among Test Objects Who Score Differently

Score range	Number of explicitation cases
Above 90	55
80-89	121
70-79	110
60-69	47
Below 60	14

5. Conclusion

The study proves the universality of conjunction explicitation in the process of interpretation by cross-referencing the source texts and the scripted interpreting outcomes. Furthermore, it reveals a number of causes behind the explicitation, and the majority of explicitation cases fall into the optional category, and are deemed sound strategic choices by test objects. In addition, in terms of frequency, it turns out that the more competent a subject is, the more frequent he/she would adopt explicitation as a strategy to improve the quality and cohesion of the interpretation outcome. Explicitation is therefore a conscious choice of strategy made by test-takers with higher level of bilingual proficiency who are well aware of differences in linguistic, cultural and logical levels. On the other hand, test-takers who lack sensitivity to those differences and fail to view interpretation as a communicative process tend to take a literal approach, whose interpretation outcomes consequently show far less cases of explicitation and turn out to be rigid and incoherent.

Determining the causes for explicitation is of great significance as it furthers the understanding of mechanism of information transfer in the process of interpretation. It is hoped that the learner-generated corpus can gather data in larger quantity and variety to enrich the future study in this regard. More qualitative tools are expected to be designed and employed in the future study as well to more elaboratively examine how learner individualities affect every step in the interpretation process to better explain the co-relation between individual learners and their choices of explicitation.

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