Information Redundancy and Coping Strategies in English-Chinese Consecutive Interpreting from *the Perspective of Variational Translation Theory*

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Abstract: *During the communication activities, redundant phenomena such as repetition and modification in the source language appears commonly, which is regarded as information redundancy. This paper focuses on coping with information redundancy in English-Chinese consecutive interpreting under the guidance of the Variational Translation Theory by using the three key techniques of "deleting, editing, and altering". Practical application demonstrates that judicious use of these strategies effectively distills core information, enhances the conciseness and logical coherence of the target language, and improves communicative efficiency. This research validates the guiding value of Variational Translation Theory in optimizing interpretation output and achieving effective cross-cultural communication.*

Keywords: *Information Redundancy, Variational Translation Theory, English-Chinese Consecutive Interpreting*

1. Introduction

With the increase of international cooperation and communication activities, consecutive interpreting, as one of the most common forms of conference interpreting, plays an increasingly vital role. During consecutive interpreting, interpreters must process large volumes of information within a short time, which makes information redundancy an inevitable phenomenon. In the process of interpreting, the interpreter's ability to identify information redundancy of the source language is key to ensure interpreting quality. Interpreting redundant information word-for-word or phrase-by-phrase leads to layered repetition, causing fatigue in information reception and comprehension.[11] Therefore, to enhance the quality of interpreting, it is necessary to adopt some adaptive translation strategies. The variational translation is a specific translation technique oriented toward the target language audience. Translators may employ various adaptive strategies based on the original text to produce a translation that aligns with the target language and its readers, ultimately achieving the goals of international communication and dissemination.[9]

This paper explores how interpreters cope with information redundancy between source and target languages by applying techniques such as "deleting, editing and altering" from the perspective of Variational Translation Theory.

2. The Definition of Information Redundancy

The concept of redundancy was first proposed by C.E Shannon in 1948, who was the founder of information theory in the field of communication.[13] Different scholars have different definitions and opinions about information redundancy. Some scholars hold the view that redundancy is necessary during the conversation because it can help listeners understand information easily. Redundancy is not only an important syntactic means, but also an indispensable discourse and pragmatic strategy in communication.[15] Some of them think redundancy is unnecessary information during communication, like repetition. According to Guo, redundant information is a signal that interferes with the accurate transmission of information.[3]

According to information theory, if the information carried by a signal within an information system, which can be obtained again from other signals within that system, then the information carried by that signal can be regarded as redundant information. [4] According to Tian, she classified information redundancy as syntactic redundancy and semantic redundancy. Syntactic redundancy refers to syntactic

structures inherent to the linguistic signal system itself. Semantic redundancy refers to redundant information generated through semantic analysis.[12] Nida believed there is 50% redundancy in English Language.[10] Hence, it can be interfered that information redundancy is commonly found during communication activities, especially interpreting.

3. The Guidance of English-Chinese Consecutive Interpreting from the Perspective of Variational Translation Theory

3.1 The Origin of Variational Translation Theory

Translation can date back to thousands of years. And the development of translation theory has gone through a long period. Many Western translation theories came out one after another, which contains the definition of variation with different names, from different angles, such as the theory of Rewriting from Lefevere of the Manipulation School, Skopos Theory from the Functionalism School and so on.[8] However, according to Yang, China's translators studied Western translation theories for a long time, but there are few domestic translation theories being studied.[16] That's the reason of the origin of Variational Translation Theory.

Modern Variational Translation Theory was first proposed by Huang Zhonglian in 1997. Subsequently, numerous translators explored this theory, gradually refining the definition of adaptation and standardizing related concepts. Translation variation is also equivalent to: in a particular situation, according to the special needs of the audience, with strategic discourse rhetoric practice.[14] According to Jiao, the systematic introduction of Variational Translation Theory belongs to the ontological study of translation studies, and it is a non-complete ontological study of variational translation for a certain translation purpose and for a specific audience.[7] By 2002, China's first monograph on the subject, *"Variational Transaltion Theory"*, was published, systematically introducing seven adaptation techniques and eleven translation methods. In 2020, Huang Zhonglian and Zhang Yongzhong co-authored the English monograph *"Variational Translation Theory"*, providing precise definitions and summarizing the theoretical framework of variation translation theory. This framework comprises one core philosophy, two contradictions, four key factors, seven techniques, and eleven methods.

Huang Zhonglian thinks that the term "variational translation" refers to a translation activity in which the translator employs seven adaptation techniques—adding, deleting, editing, narrating, altering, integrating, and altering—to absorb the original contents based on the overt or covert translation requests of target readers in a specific condition.[5]

3.2 Applicability of Variational Translation Theory to English-Chinese Consecutive Interpreting

Overall, both interpreting and translation require specific strategic and theoretical guidelines. The author believes that immediacy plays an important role in interpreting. Interpreters must rapidly catch the main idea, immediately handle the key information and convey it to the audience within a short time. Gile found one of the most striking and challenging phenomena in interpreting is the interpreters' persistent perception and developed the Effort Models for simultaneous interpreting, for consecutive interpreting and for sight translation.[2] In the process of consecutive interpretating, interpreters are required to catch the information of original language, and complete the following steps: listen and understand, short-term memory, taking notes and outputting content. According to Yuan, consecutive interpreters process information at the textual level. The immediacy requires the interpreter to grasp the main information and omit secondary information when cope with the information from the source language, which not only enables interpreters to allocate cognitive resources reasonably but also ensures the coherence and fluency of the comprehension process.[17] Obviously, an interpreter's short-term memory capacity falls far below the demands of the source language information input. Even with note-taking, verbatim memorization is impossible, interpreters still need to reorganize the source language information and flexibly process it. Consequently, the Variational Translation Theory can help interpreters select specific techniques to handle source language information. To promote the efficiency of information redundancy according to the source text, interpreters can adopt the three key techniques from Variational Translation Theory, namely, deleting, editing and altering.

4. Guidance of Variational Translation Theory on Coping with Information Redundancy

According to Fang, during verbal communication, information that exceeds the necessary amount

of information is redundant information, namely, the language form that cannot offer effective information to the listeners is redundant.[1] During the English-Chinese consecutive interpreting, the interpreters may encounter various situations, for example, some speakers may be nervous and then their discourse is redundant, verbose, or even illogical, which may cause information redundancy. Hence, coping with information redundancy plays an important role in the consecutive interpreting.

Interpreters can, under the guidance of Variatonal Transaltion Theory, address the information redundancy by employing translation techniques such as deleting, editing and altering so as to catch the core ideas and content to convey effective information to the audience.

4.1 Deleting

In consecutive interpreting, it is inevitable that sometimes there will be jams and disfluency, which may caused by repetition during interpretating. Some disfluency resulted from the interpreter herself and some caused by the speaker. The author selects some examples to explain the occurrence of this phenomenon. The repetition caused by the interpreter is sometimes due to the psychological state, so the interpreter needs to make some adjustments. As for the repetition caused by the speaker, the interpreter should take appropriate measures to achieve more accuracy and fluency.

Deleting refers to deleting information that target readers do not want, including dross or redundancies.[6] However, deleting does not mean arbitrary deletion of content, but rather the selection of the most valuable and practical information to present to the target audience. In other words, interpreters must grasp the speaker's core ideas and eliminate secondary information. The reason for employing editing techniques lies in the fact that interpreters have limited attention during the interpreting process, necessitating the reduction of secondary information to lessen the memory burden.

Example 1:

Speaker: And it is also important to make this connection that by telling your audience the importance of the talk, so why this topic is important for them. And why they should listen to this?

Analysis: In this example, the speaker repeated the word "important" many times, and he conveyed the same meaning by asking two questions. These words and questions actually repeated themselves a lot. There are three words containing the same meaning, namely, vital. This is the symbol of information redundancy. Some may think that the speaker may want audience pay attention to the importance of this part maybe the repeated use the word is a strong rhetorical way for creating emphasis or giving a deep impression on the audience. However, by deleting these repetitions, the content will be simpler and less redundant. Hence, when interpreted this paragraph, the interpreter omitted the second word "important" and then deleted the second question to show the clarified information to audience. Under the guidance of Variational Translation Theory, the interpreter used the technique of "deleting" to delete the unnecessary words and sentence to purse the conveying of core idea instead of the source language output, which achieved the simplicity and clarity of target language output.

Example 2:

Speaker: So, the writing is a creative process. A kind of creative process is not something that happens every so often and (only lived) only with art, but it also happens in everyday life, like all the time (like, like) when you (when you) work on any other activity (when you do any other activity). The creative process happens even (when you) when you do some cooking, you often go through the creative process.

Analysis: In this segment, the speaker wanted to tell the audience what the writing is. And he set some examples to show the situation of writing. However, he unconsciously repeated several phrases, such as "only" "like" "when you", that is because he was not delivering content from a complete script. He was speaking based on some keywords on the slides, so he tended to backtrack and repeat words trying to organize his speech structure. Actually, these repeated words are kind of redundancy. And the repetition is no need to leave an impression on the audience. Therefore, deleting should be applied to reduce the redundancy caused by such kind of repetition. When interpreting this paragraph, the interpreter deleted those repeated words and reorganized the structure of these sentences to better clarify the speaker's original message, appropriately omitting redundant and meaningless textual information to produce a more logically coherent output. This enables the audience to grasp the core essence more clearly.

4.2 Editing

Interpreting features time-sensitive, which contributes to a certain extent to word-for-word interpreting, especially for shorter utterances, because interpreters have less time to organize the flow of information and are more likely to follow the original structures. While word-for-word interpreting leads to poor coherence and unnatural structures in target languages, thus, interpreters should reproduce the naturalness and fluency in the target language by reconstructing the sentences. Editing is a flexible translation strategy where interpreters reorganize information by processing the source text before oral output to ensure accuracy. Editing enables the content of an original work to be systematic and perfect. It consists of selection (from part of the original work), arrangement (of the content of original work according to a certain sequence), and translation (of the original work into the target language).[6] That is to say, editing involves logically restructuring the original text according to the target language's expressive conventions to enhance coherence. The fundamental purpose of employing editing techniques is to adopt the audience's perspective, ensuring both clear structure and complete content.

Example 3:

Speaker: And you also need to think about who your audience are and what are they expecting from you. Like this presentation, I did two years ago, a presentation very similar to this. It was a physical environment. I was in Fuzhou doing this. But now it's an online, so I had to think about these things.

Analysis: During interpreting, apart from taking the original text into consideration to make sure the interpreting content faithful to the original utterance, it is equally important to ensure the naturalness and fluency of the output content. In consecutive interpretating, word-for-word interpreting may occur more frequently. For shorter sentences, the interpreter can easily memorize the sentence structure and handle it. However, unlike translation, interpretating sometimes requires the retention of the original form, whereas the main goal of interpreting is to convey the original meaning. Therefore, rather than retain the original form, it is more important to convey the information concisely. Obviously, although English and Chinese sentences have many similarities, they also have many different characteristics. In this example, some synonymous repetitions are mentioned. The underlined expression "I did two years ago", "I was doing this" convey the similar meaning. Obviously, the speaker wanted to tell the audience that he went to Fuzhou before and gave a speech before. When interpreting this part, the interpreter reconstructed the sentence and teased out the logic. In terms of the core meaning, the first sentence was enough to convey the information. Hence, under the guidance of the Variational Translation Theory, the interpreter reorganized the structure of the segment by using the technique of "editing" to output the core information of target language so as to simplify the target language to the audience.

4.3 Altering

Chinese and Western cultures are heterogeneous cultures, which differ greatly from each other in ideology, values and ways of thinking. As the carrier of culture, language is inevitably endowed with unique cultural connotations. In the process of interpretating, the collision of cultural differences between China and the west is also inevitable. According to Huang, altering means change. The original work undergoes obvious changes in content and form after being translated, including alteration, re-composition and transformation. Altering changes the original work, such as changing poetry into prose, tragedy into comedy, explanation into discussion, or vice versa.[6]

Example 4:

Speaker: There is so much information available on the Internet on these topics, so you can read and develop your presentation skills more and more. And then more you will practice, more you will become better in this.

Analysis: In this example, the speaker employed a comparative sentence structure "the more..., the more..." to convey the idea that progress can be achieved through diligent practice. However, this expression is largely redundant in terms of grammatical structure. During interpreting, the interpreter analyzed the sentence and interpreted the sentence into "Practice makes perfect" in Chinese. Guided by the Variational Translation Theory, the interpreter skillfully addressed this information redundancy through the technique of "altering". By using a classic Chinese proverb, the interpreter clearly and concisely conveyed the speaker's core message, enabling the audience to grasp the information more quickly. Moreover, since the audience are Chinese, invoking a Chinese proverb establishes an immediate connection, thereby achieving effective target-language delivery. Variational Translation

Theory emphasizes that translation is not only the transfer between languages, but also the cultural communication. Consequently, the interpreter should analyze the source language based on the cultural background, flexibly adjust in terms of the specific context to make up for the cultural differences, and ensure that the output of the target language conforms to the audience.

5. Conclusion

Consecutive interpreting is a kind of interpreting. This is not only a process of listening and analyzing language in virtue of cognitive language but also a process of understanding and expressing. Consecutive interpreting is an activity that requires immediate processing of information and linguistic conversion, during which time information redundancy inevitably occurs. Interpreting features immediacy, which requires interpreters to have solid bilingual ability, rich knowledge reserves, flexible on-site response ability, good short-term memory and skilled note-taking skills.

As a new translation theory, the Variational Translation Theory effectively addresses information redundancy through its three core techniques: deleting, editing and altering. When faced with lengthy or logically unclear speech, interpreters should draw upon their accumulated knowledge and employ flexible translation strategies to achieve simplicity and clarity. Variational Translation Theory pays more attention to the audience s special requests and needs, and assists them to attain desired information without any wasted time or information, and unnecessary repetition. That is what the interpreter should do.

In the future, the author will continue to enrich her professional quality, expand the reserve of encyclopedic knowledge, improve her understanding of the importance of preparation before interpreting, and further study the theoretical knowledge of Variational Translation Theory, the author tries to master the specific application of Variational Translation Theory in the process of interpreting practice and improve herself in the process of practical study.

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