# The Interpretation in Cross-Cultural Communication

## Challenges and Strategies

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**Abstract:**

This paper is intended to explore the interpretation of cross-cultural communication (CCC) and analyze the difficulties experienced by interpreters in the CCC. This paper identifies two challenges in CCC, analyses their reasons, and develops two corresponding strategies. This study refers to previous research and combines it with authentic examples. Thus, this paper identifies challenges, including humor, the cultivation of talents, and certain intralingual and extralinguistic facts. The reason for the humor is various cultural backgrounds. At the same time, another reason for cultivating talents is the lack of relevant personnel cultivating programs. However, certain intralingual and extralinguistic facts summarize the whole, leading to an information gap. Overall, the proposed strategies are 1) information processing, which can mobilize the brain; 2) effort distribution, which needs to find out certain measures that are compatible with interpreters. This paper aims to provide a reference for the interpretation of CCC.

**Keywords:** Interpretation, Cross-Cultural Communication, Challenge, Strategy

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, humanities conferences, economy and trade conferences, and international cooperation conferences have been paid much attention to, which has given rise to the increasing demand for interpreters [1]. In a number of high-level conferences in any field, the simultaneous interpreter is an indispensable part. However, simultaneous interpretation expects the interpreter the most. The effort paid by an interpreter in a simultaneous interpretation is more than five times the same as in a consecutive interpretation [1]. In the contemporary world, the main characteristic of the interpretation is cross-cultural. The difficulty lies in diverse cultural backgrounds, authentic spoken language, taboo terms, etc. Regarding the organization of this paper, In the Challenge Section, this paper cites four examples to clarify three different issues. It refers to previous studies to clarify the importance of talent. At the same time, in the Strategy Section, this paper puts forward corresponding solutions according to the challenges mentioned.

## 2. Challenge

### 2.1 Humor

Challenges cannot be avoided in interpretation among different languages due to various cultural backgrounds. From the perspective of communication, to make the conversation more attractive and less nervous, people tend to use some humorous statements to show their kindness and humor.

However, it depends. Referring to Wang Li, humor can be found in individuals' daily communication, which is a conscious positive application of languages [2]. Humor breaks the communication deadlock, makes one's request much gentler, and builds stable group relationships [2]. In day-to-day life, humor is beneficial for common people to reconcile their anxious living atmosphere, whereas, in business negotiations or diplomatic occasions, humor plays a rather different role. Therefore, the interpreter is expected to thoroughly understand the two totally different cultures held by the people he served while working. Otherwise, the original meaning that the speaker is willing to convey will be missed. As a result, they may lose a cooperation opportunity or an agreement, in a word, a win-win situation.

**Table 1. The C-E Translation on Humorous Statement**

| Chinese | English |
|---|---|
| A: 我叫白云。B: 我叫黑土。<br>A: 我 71。B: 我 75。<br>A: 我属鸡。B: 我属虎。<br>A: 这是我老公。B: 这是我老母。 | (1) literal translation:<br>A: My name is white cloud. B: My name is black soil.<br>A: I am 71. B: I am 75.<br>A: I was born in the year of the Rooster. B: I was born in the year of the Tiger.<br>A: This is my husband. B: This is my old mother.<br>(2) paraphrase translation:<br>A: My name is Baiyun. B: My name is Heitu.<br>A: I am 71. B: I am 75.<br>A: I was born in the year of the Rooster. B: I was born in the year of the Tiger.<br>A: This is my husband. B: This is my wife. |

Table 1 is from a classical Chinese opusculum. In the Chinese section, the scriptwriter used two concrete nouns, these two characters' names, and unique Chinese antonyms to show their relationship in pursuing humor and rhyme. Therefore, the interpreter is expected to translate with the understanding instead of only literal translation. However, the other party or person always encounters difficulty getting the information or feeling. The statements that people express usually include implicit cultural meanings subconsciously. Lee Geumhee states three main issues: the comprehension of the source language, language conversion, and fluency [3]. That is because the interpreter is ill-equipped to hear voices and discriminate and adequately understands humor [3]. Moreover, many interpreters cannot find proper expressions when they convert the language [3].

**Table 2. The C-E Translation on Proper Expressions**

| Chinese | English |
|---|---|
| 碎碎平安 | (1) literal translation: shattering peace<br>(2) paraphrase translation: pieces for peace |

Table 2 involves two difficulties: puns and idioms. The interpreter should be familiar with the original meaning of the Chinese idiom. Otherwise, the situation will be awkward.

According to Curcó, what the interpreter needs to do in an interesting conversation is not the literal translation of the source language but a humorous interpretation that can imply the original meaning and give the recipient almost the same feeling that the speaker is willing to show [4]. At the same time, to achieve this, the interpreter has to shift the center of attention from the structure of the source language to the mental processes that a recipient goes through during the conversation [4]. In other words, what is more significant is the connotative meaning and feeling instead of the words and sentences themselves. Hence, interpreters are expected to remember that their crucial task is to express the meaning and feeling rather than the interpretation itself.

## 2.2 The Cultivation of Talents

Challenges occur not only in the process of interpretation but also in other parts, such as training, related industries, and payments. Along with the growth of the international world, CCC is an indispensable part of human life. Mercer et al. believe that without communication among individuals, conflicts will come along [5]. Therefore, the key to solving these problems is establishing and maintaining good relationships among different parties with distinct languages and cultural backgrounds [5]. In this case, the interpreter plays an important role [5]. Nevertheless, there are also two negative aspects. One is that most of them are from almost different educational systems. Hence, what is neglected is that the interpreter has already been affected during the studying process. Guo Haoyang embraces that individuals can hardly be objective in circumstances with any culture [6]. The other is that although there seem to be many talents in the world, few of them can accomplish their aim very well. Jiang and Li argue that in China, there is no perfect law and management in the interpretation industry, which leads to chaotic markets, poor quality, and unprotected rights of the interpreter [7]. To sum up, in cultivation, relevant personnel cultivating programs are supposed to be implemented as soon as possible in light of the rapid development of the contemporary world.

## 2.3 Intralingual and Extralinguistic Factors

When individuals make interpretations, all of the challenges they have faced can generally be divided into two kinds: intralingual sources and extralinguistic sources. All of them can give rise to an information gap, which eventually causes differences between the source and target languages [6]. Intralingual factors usually include high speaking speed, complex sentences, and ambiguous logic [6].

**Table 3. The E-C Translation on the Intralingual Factor**

| English | Chinese |
|---|---|
| If we stop defining each other by what we are not and start defining ourselves by who we are——we can all be freer, which is what HeForShe is about. | 如果我们不再用 " 我们不是谁 " 来定义彼此 , 而是开始用 " 我们是谁 " 来定义自己 , 那么我们都会更加轻松自由 , 这就是 " 他为她 " 这个运动的宗旨。 |

According to Table 3, though it is not very long, this complex sentence includes three noun clauses. Meanwhile, every clause plays a decisive role in the general meaning. The interpreter can break up the sentence into three smaller parts, each with its clause, in fact, the sense group, to relieve the cognitive load. It is universally acknowledged that English grammar is explicit, while Chinese takes the opposite side [8]. Therefore, translation errors will be made if the interpreter fails to distinguish antecedents, the determiner, and so on. Meanwhile, extralinguistic factors include cultural backgrounds and context [6].

**Table 4. The E-C Translation on the Extralinguistic Factor**

| English | Chinese |
|---|---|
| I think it is right that I am paid the same as my male counterparts. I think it is right that I should be able to make decisions about my own body. I think it is right that women be involved on my behalf in the policies and decisions that will affect my life. I think it is right that, socially, I am afforded the same respect as men. | 我认为 , 和男同事得到一样的薪资应该是一项权利。我认为 , 掌握自己的身体应该是一项权利。我认为 , 女性参与到政策和生活的决策应该是一项权利。我认为 , 在社会上 , 女性与男性应该被授予同样的尊重。 |

Table 4 shows the challenge here is the context and political background. Thus, the interpreter should try to make the translation as serious and rhythmical as possible but not aggressive when interpreting. The speaker is advocating instead of forcing. In summary, both preparation and reflection are vital during interpretation. From the perspective of preparation, searching for the cultural background and information should be the first step once the interpreter gets access to the related materials. Similarly, for the reflection, the interpreter is expected to get feedback from the audience and listen to the record to sum up the experience.

# 3. Strategies of Interpretation in A Cross-Cultural Communication

## 3.1 Information Processing

In order to tackle the problems mentioned, the interpreter should get to know relevant theories and learn more strategies that can help them meet any situation much more flexibly. When individuals receive much input at once, messing up is inevitable. As a result, it is worth paying attention to how to process information and translate it quickly.

Yao Maomao classified the difficulties of information processing into three categories [9]. The first one is processing the characteristic vocabulary and its collocation, including terminologies, idioms, and sayings [9]. The second one is special sentence patterns, which include the topic and the tautology [9]. The third one is frequent turn-taking, which always occurs between dialogues or between the dialogue and voiceover [9]. Accordingly, Yao Maomao also mentioned corresponding solutions. In the first place, the interpreter ought to speculate the meaning of the terminology based on the context and take advantage of the discourse function to leave something out or add something while translating the idiom and the saying [9]. In the second place, looking for the subject of the original sentence and omitting the repetition is useful for identifying the sentence structure of the translation [9]. In the third place, individuals must combine the conversation and amplify the content to clarify the gist and achieve co-

herence [9].

The interpreter is expected to mobilize the brain as soon as possible in the interpretation and prepare as much as possible for the sample materials before the start, especially in a CCC. In conclusion, although the theory does help, applying the strategy in the work and practicing it frequently is as important as understanding the theory.

## 3.2 Effort Distributions

Knowing how to distribute one's effort is a key strategy to face the challenge during the interpretation. Whether it is the simultaneous interpretation or the consecutive interpretation, listening, speaking, reading, and writing are imperative. The step should be)Reading: the interpreter is supposed to ask for corresponding information, especially in a CCC, in case there is something unfamiliar; 2) Listening: the interpreter should concentrate on the speaker to avoid omitting information; 3) Writing: while listening to it would be better for the interpreter to write something in shorthand to help memorize the key information; 4) Speaking: be loudly, fluently, and all play an integral role. Therefore, based on the effort model launched by Daniel Gill, Zhang Yanyan introduced three strategies concerning effort distribution [10]. To begin with, the interpreter should try to forecast the background information and unite like information [10]. In addition, predicting the surrounding text is essential [10]. Furthermore, individuals must catch keywords, distinguish the sense group, associate, recall, and distribute effort reasonably between notes and the brain [10]. Equally, Wang Hongyan combined the Effort Model with compression techniques proposed by Chernov and adopted syllable compression, vocabulary compression, syntax compression, and semanteme compression in practice [11]. Ultimately, she found that this combination is conducive to coordinating effort distribution, relieving the interpreter's cognitive load, conveying the speaker's information much more concisely, and is meaningful for improving the quality of interpretation as well as the work performance of the interpreter [11].

In brief, effort distribution is more than a theoretical strategy. For the sake of achieving the goal, individuals are required to adopt this strategy into practice and finally find measures that are compatible with themselves.

## 4. Conclusion

This paper elaborates on the challenges and strategies by the previous study. Interpretation should be treated seriously as a sophisticated work combining listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Nowadays, along with the development in every field, the demand for interpreters is unprecedented. Accordingly, quite a few problems come

into being, for instance, a poor understanding of other cultures, poor cultivation of talents, and insufficient theoretical knowledge of interpretation and general knowledge. Consequently, addressing these issues is worth paying attention to. Otherwise, the development of the interpretation industry will lag behind the others. However, they can certainly be solved properly while applying proper strategies. To do so, individuals are expected to handle it from two aspects. One is information processing, which, to a large extent, helps them meet any circumstances with great facilities. The other is effort distribution, which is necessary for individuals to face the challenges during the interpretation. Many experts and scholars have already developed several pragmatic approaches domestically and abroad. This paper also makes a few plain suggestions by analyzing previous research. However, from the perspective of the practice, the joint efforts of every interpreter and relevant authorities are still needed to achieve the final success. In this industry, to some extent, practice is even more important than theoretical work. Therefore, it is significant for interpreters to remember that avoiding engaging in idle theorizing by all means plays a key role.

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