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从中国学生译员与英语母语者的不同视角看
国际外事会议汉译英口译质量

Quality of Chinese to English Interpreting in Diplomatic
Conferences in the Eyes of Chinese Trainee Interpreters and
English Native Speakers

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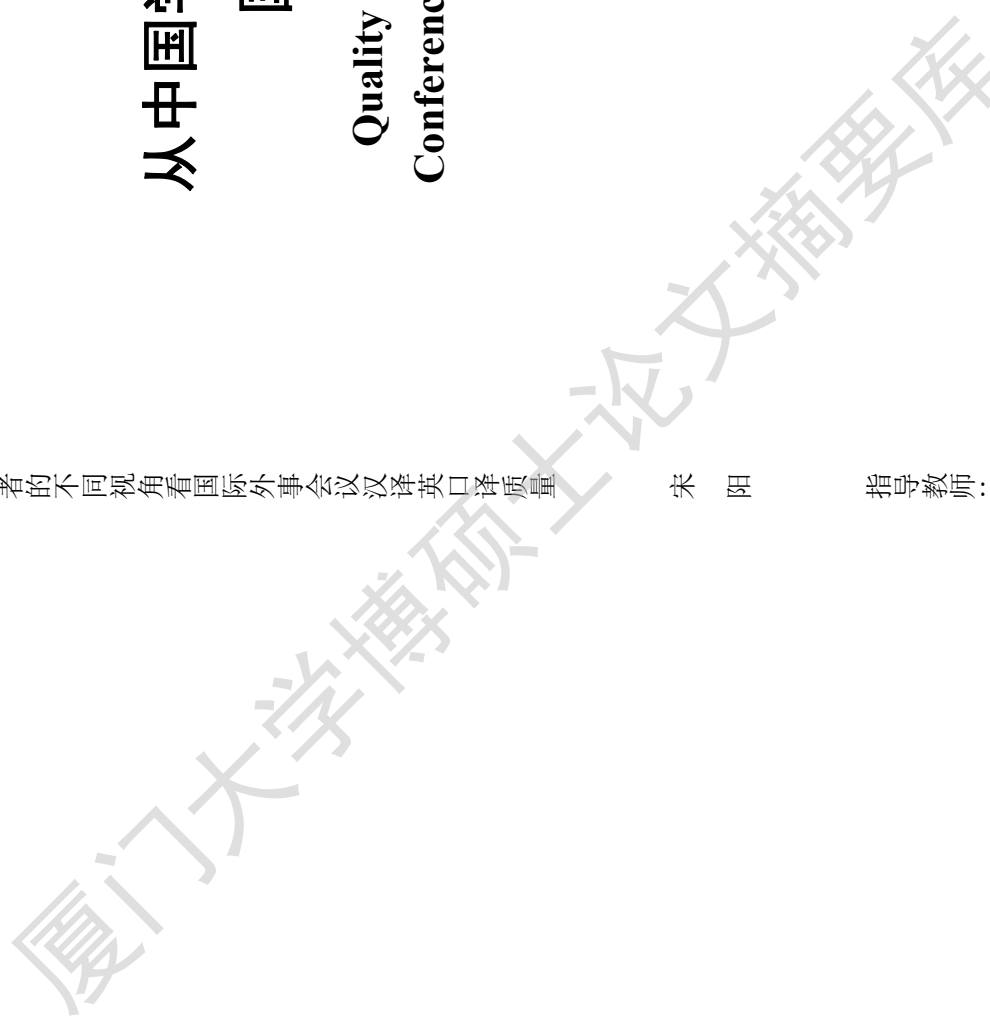
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Abstract

Users' perspectives are always highlighted in the assessment of interpreting quality. User groups consist of speakers, audience, conference organizers and other relevant parties, among whom the audience is the major target population of interpreting activities. Thus, audience's perspectives on interpreting performance have played a very significant role in the assessment of interpreting quality. In the process of interpreting A language to B language, linguistic and cultural differences may cause translating barriers for interpreters and information-receiving asymmetry for the audience. In Chinese to English interpreting, English native speakers account for a large proportion of the audience group. Due to differences in Chinese and English syntax structures and cultural backgrounds between China and western countries, English native speakers may perceive the interpreting quality differently from Chinese interpreters. Among varied categories of conferences, diplomatic conference shares its particularity on culture, language and speech delivery. Therefore, this thesis will compare Chinese interpreters' and English native speakers' evaluations of a simultaneous interpreting for President Xi's keynote speech in Boao Forum of Asia through surveys and interviews. The data will be collected and analyzed. Both practical and pedagogical suggestions will be proposed in order to improve the quality of Chinese to English interpreting. This thesis consists of five chapters, which are illustrated as follows:

Chapter One is Introduction, which introduces the concepts related to interpreting quality assessment, including the definition of quality, the standards of interpreting quality and users' perspectives. Besides, the research questions are proposed in this section.

Chapter Two is Literature Review, which reviews the previous research on the assessment of interpreting quality and the role of users' perspectives in such assessment both in and outside China. Previous studies enlighten the author to

undertake this research which will enrich the existing theories and findings in this field.

Chapter Three is Methodological Approaches. Related methodological approaches, participants, materials, and the software adopted to analyze statistics are illustrated in this section.

Chapter Four is Results and Discussion. Data have been collected and analyzed by the professional statistical package. The comparison is made between the evaluations of Chinese trainee interpreters and English native speakers.

Chapter Five is Conclusion. The argument has been restated and the limitations of this research have been explained in this part. The practical, pedagogical and pragmatic significance of the research will be highlighted.

Key Words：interpreting quality assessment; audience; native speaker; questionnaire survey; interviews

摘 要

口译使用者是口译质量评估活动中的重要角色，使用者包括讲者，听众，会场组织者及其他相关人员。其中，听众作为口译活动的直接服务对象，对口译质量的评估具有一定的发言权。在母语译入外语的过程中，由于语言背景及文化背景的差异，源语与译语信息不对等的情况频频出现。就汉译英而言，汉语及英语的语言结构差异，中国与西方国家的文化差异将影响到中国译员的表现及听众信息的接收。考虑到英语母语者是汉译英活动中的主要听众，在各类会议中国际外事会议在文化，语言，发言风格上具有特殊性，因此笔者将从英语母语者的视角出发，通过问卷调查及访谈等形式对 2013 博鳌论坛上习近平主席主旨发言中一段讲话的同声传译质量进行评估，并设置学生译员组，将译员组的评估数据与英语母语者的数据进行对比分析，为全面、客观地评估汉译英口译质量提供有效的实证研究支持，并对今后汉译英口译培训教学提供借鉴。

全文共分五个章节：

第一章为引言，介绍了从听众角度看口译质量评估的相关背景概念，包括什么是质量，如何评估口译质量，如何从使用者或听众角度评价口译质量，并提出研究问题。

第二章是文献综述部分，充分回顾了中外口译研究者们对质量评估及从听众角度看口译质量评估的理论研究及实证研究，并从前人的经验中总结出本文研究的落脚点。

第三章是本文实证研究的具体介绍，包括实验方法、参与者、实验所用材料、及实验所用数据分析软件。

第四章是实验数据分析，通过 SPSS 数据分析软件将数据进行整理，对比中国学生译员与以英语为母语的听众对同一篇会议口译的参数评估，也对口译原文表达的评价进行深入剖析解读，比较学生译员与听众对英语表达的不同看法。

第五章是结论部分，重申本文论点及研究结果，并对此次研究中出现的问题及实验设计不足之处进行总结，同时也对此次研究的实践意义进行说明。

关键字：口译质量评估 听众 英语母语者 问卷调查 访谈

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Chapter 1　Introduction

1.1 Quality

Quality is an abstract and elusive concept. When Phaedrus's student is attempting to propose a conversation on quality, he replies that "I think there is such a thing as quality, but that as soon as you try to define it, something goes haywire. You can't do it" (Robert, 2011: 91). To briefly understand the meaning, people tend to equate the terms efficiency, effectiveness, and equity with quality (Adams, 1993). Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary (1997) simply defines it as "degree of goodness or worth". However, this concept has been interpreted differently in different domains. For example, business and education professionals may perceive the "degree of goodness or worth" from distinct perspectives.

In the business area, quality is a core component connecting products, firms, customers and markets. Although high quality products lead to firm profitability, customer satisfaction, and market prosperity (Deming 1982; Kennedy 1987), the three parties may illustrate quality in their own ways. Firms are quality producers, who provide products and services with the consideration of their own quality standards and customers' "ideal expectations". Customers, at the other end of the quality evaluation process, experience the quality and "perceive the attributes of quality through the lens of their measurement knowledge and motivation, emotions, and expectations" (Peter et al, 2012:4). Firms and customers' interaction on quality finally formulates general quality standards of the market. International Organization of Standards (ISO) specially issues documents to introduce eight quality management principles: Customer focus, Leadership, Involvement of people, Process approach, System approach to management, Continual improvement, Factual approach to decision making, and Mutually beneficial supplier relationships , on which ISO 9000 series are based (2012).

Researchers on education interpret "quality" from another perspective. They have

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reached consensus on some essential elements of quality in education, including healthy learners, safe and protective environment, relevant content, well-managed process, and sound outcomes, which are enormously affected by political, cultural and economic contexts. However, redefinition on quality in education has been proposed as the political, cultural and economic contexts are changing all the way (Jeanette et al, 2000).

Being quite different from its definitions and functions in business and education fields, quality plays various roles in interpreting system, which can be seen, for example, as the implementation of quality standards (Déjean, 1990:155); the norm-lasting action (Shlesinger, 1997:124); the result of an "strategic process" (Kalina, 1998); the satisfaction of customers' expectations (Schimitt, 1998); the "balance of actual service minus expected service (Quality=Actural Service – Expected Service) " (Kurz, 2003:17); and "an interactively constructed concept" (Bot, 2003:40).

1.2 Quality of Interpreting

1.2.1 Defining Interpreting

In early years, interpreting was simply perceived as "oral translation", which excluded some specific characteristics of interpreting. Decades of academic studies have witnessed various versions of its definitions. Most of them imply the features like communication, utterance and immediacy. As early as 1960s, Otto Kade (1968) defined interpreting from two dimensions: "the source-language text is presented only once and thus cannot be reviewed or replayed" and "the target-language text is produced under time pressure, with little chance for correction and revision" (Pöchhacker, 2004：10). Nord (2001: 11) pointed out that "Interpreting is the translation of a source-language text, presented only once, usually in oral form, into a target-language text which is very difficult to check and can hardly be corrected because of the lack of time". Interpreting can be regarded as a cross-cultural communicative activity, which not only contributes to realizing interlingual code

switching, but also accurately delivers the communicative intentions of both sides (蔡 小红&方凡泉，2002:280). According to Pöchhacker, interpreting is "a form of translation in which a first and final rendition in another language is produced on the basis of a one-time presentation of an utterance in a source language" (Pöchhacker, 2004:11). Based on previous definitions, the author describes "interpreting" as a cross-cultural and cross-lingual activity, aiming at facilitating communication among all parties.

The nature of interpreting decides the methods or standards employed to assess the quality of interpreting. Interpreting can be perceived as a work of art, a product or a service. Due to possible multidimensional roles of interpreting, corresponding measures should be adopted for assessing its quality. In early years, Glémet (1958) indicated that interpreting was a service by proposing the phrase "interpretation service" when he tried to present the basic standards for interpreting quality. Decades later, Moser-Mercer (1996) declared that if interpreting were a work of art, it should be promoted to art appreciators and should be evaluated by the rules of "figure skating competition". If interpreting were a product, much of the focus should be put on the output and certain quality standards. In this regard, some influential factors will be overlooked, which leads to incomplete evaluation. Thus, Moser-Mercer (1996) concluded that interpreting should be a service and be assessed as a service. Subsequently, Pöchhacker (2007:237) suggested that "the duality of interpreting as a product and as a service" aroused the uncertainty and disagreement in the process of judging an interpreting performance. In his opinion, "interpreting is, first and foremost, a communication service". Wang Dongzhi and Wang Lidi (2007) discussed two mainstreams on interpreting quality research: "product-oriented" and "function-oriented". Product-oriented research illustrated that interpreting should be treated as a product, and assessing interpreting by certain quality standards was similar to employing "ISO9000" to test the "product" in the market. While the starting point of function-oriented research should be set on users' expectations. However, they restated that those two dimensions were not distinctly separated but should be