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硕 士 学 位 论 文

**Relevance Theory and Consecutive
Interpreting: Discourse Markers**

关联理论与交替传译：话语标记语

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Synopsis

Interpreting Discourse Markers (DMs) between Chinese and English has always raised difficulties for interpreters. This is due to different thinking patterns growing out of distinct cultures, which underlie the two languages. The English language, due to its highly strict and compact grammar, tends to resort to Discourse Markers to fulfill the inferential relations. While in the Chinese language, which relies heavily on meaning perception, inferential relations are usually latent without any obvious signs like DMs. The author intends to address the problems occurring in the interpreting of DMs between Chinese and English under the theoretic framework of Relevance Theory. By discussing interpreting under Relevance theory and how DMs help to realize relevance of an utterance during interpreting, the principles for addressing problems arising from DMs interpreting are proposed.

To begin with, chapter 1 discusses the purpose of the paper and introduces the theoretic basis. Examples are given to illustrate problems in consecutive interpreting resulted from different uses of DMs between the Chinese and English language, which lead to misunderstandings in communication and even communication failures. Then it is proposed that such problems can be best analyzed and addressed under Relevance Theory, which is a theory of cognition and communication.

Chapter 2 introduces basic concepts and assumptions in Relevance Theory and discusses the ostensive-inferential nature of interpreting. First important concepts such as communicator's intentions, context and the

principle of relevance are discussed in detail. Then an ostensive-inferential model of interpreting is proposed under Gutt's relevance-based theory of translation, which holds that interpreting is an interpretive use of language and the goal of interpreting is to achieve optimal resemblance as corresponding to the concept of optimal relevance in Relevance theory. Interpreting, divided into comprehension and reformulation, and the role of interpreter are further examined within the scope of Relevance Theory.

In Chapter 3, Discourse Markers are analyzed within relevance-theoretic framework, and then the deep-rooted reasons for differences in the use of DMs between the Chinese and English languages and interpreting problems arising from such differences are explained with examples. The definition, basic property and classification of DMs are examined under relevance-theoretic framework. Next, the important role of DMs in context choice is elaborated within Relevance Theory and its significance in interpreting as interlingual communication is evaluated. Finally the differences in the use of DMs between the Chinese and English languages are examined under a cultural scenario and problems including absence of necessary DMs, excessive DMs and misinterpretation of DMs, arising from such differences are illustrated with abundant examples.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the discussion of principles that can be employed in addressing the above problems. The implications of Relevance Theory are encompassed in the three proposed principles: fulfilling the latent inferential relations, coordinating procedural functions and propositions, and paying attention to propositional attitude.

The last chapter is the conclusion, which summarized the results of

the study and proposed directions for future study on the interpreting of DMs between the Chinese and English language.

Key words: Interpreting, Discourse Markers, Relevance Theory.

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摘 要

话语标记语的翻译一直以来都是中英口译的难点。这些困难源自英语和汉语特殊的语言组织形式。而语言的特征来自于不同文化和思维方式。英语拥有高度严密和精确的语法结构，因此倾向于使用显性标志话语标记语来标识推理逻辑关系。然而汉语的推理关系的表达则依赖于总体意义的感知和潜在的表达，并不一定依靠话语标记语的明示。作者在这篇论文中试图在关联理论的框架下研究和探讨在英语和汉语间口译中话语标记语的翻译问题。

本文认为在关联理论下翻译是一项明示推理行为，而话语标记语在这一明示推理过程中的角色是帮助实现话语的关联，最后得出基本原则，用于解决话语标记语在英语和汉语间口译中提出的问题的。

第一章概述论文的初衷并提出论文的理论基础 – 关联理论。本章首先结合例句阐述由于英语和汉语话语标记语的不同用法带来的口译中的翻译问题，及由此引发的交际失败和误解。紧接着提出关联理论可以从认知的角度探讨口译，为话语标记语的翻译问题提供了一个完善的理论框架。

第二章介绍了关联理论的基本观点，在此框架下阐释了翻译的明示推理的本质。本章首先具体说明关联理论中的重要概念如交际者的意图，语境和关联原则。接下来根据格特的关联翻译理论提出口译的明示推理模式。在该模式下，翻译被认为是语言的解释性用法，而翻译的目的是达到最佳相似性，与关联理论中的最佳关联性的概念相对应。最后继续在关联理论下加以详细分析口译的两个过程理解和重构，并且特别阐释了译者在翻译这一特殊明示推理行为中的角色。

在第三章中，作者在关联理论框架下讨论话语标记语，并解释了

英语和汉语间话语标记语使用差异的深层原因，及由此带来的翻译问题。本章首先在关联理论框架下讨论了话语标记语的定义，基本特征和分类。然后详细阐述了话语标记语在话语理解过程中对语境选择的作用及其在口译中的意义。最后在文化背景下解释了汉语和英语中话语标记语使用差异的原因，并用具体事例说明了三种话语标记语的翻译问题：缺少必要的话语标记语，多余的话语标记语，话语标记语的误译。

第四章主要提出用于解决口译中话语标记语翻译问题的原则。关联理论给翻译带来的启示融入于以下三条原则中：实现潜在的推理关系，协调程序编码和命题之间的联系，注意话语的命题态度。

最后一章是结论，总结了该论文的研究结果，并为未来的话语标记语翻译的研究方向提出了建议。

关键词：口译，话语标记语，关联理论

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Chapter 1 Introduction

In interpreting between Chinese and English, interpreters are often confronted with difficulties arising from discourse markers such as *so, and, moreover, but, after all*, which have been believed to play an important role in the fulfillment of various relations in the flow of discourse. This problem is to a large extent caused by different uses of discourse markers (referred to as DMs) in Chinese and English, which attach different importance to the realization of logical relations through explicit linguistic forms. While English emphasizes the obvious indication of such relations, Chinese relies more on the perception of these relations from the latent flow of meaning. Let us examine the following examples:

(1) (a) 中国是一个有五千年文明历史的国家，(b) 从历史文化来了解和认识中国，是一个重要的视角。

Interpretation 1: China is a country with 5,000 years of civilization. It is important to approach China from a historical and cultural perspective.

Interpretation 2: China is a country with 5,000 years of civilization. *Therefore*, it is important to approach china from a historical and cultural perspective.

From the above example, we can perceive a premise-conclusion relation between segment (a) and (b), however this relation is not displayed by any overt forms in the original Chinese speech. If we simply follow the way the Chinese language arranges the constituents of the utterance, we would end up with a bad interpretation like interpretation 1,

from which we cannot see any relation between segment (a) and (b). We propose that '*therefore*' should be added between segment (a) and (b), which enables the audience to understand the utterance more easily.

(2) (a) 中国政府十分重视环境保护的工作，(b) 把环境保护和控制人口都列为基本国策。(c) 国务院，也就是中国的中央政府，颁布了一系列保护环境的法规和措施，(d) 同时加强了各级政府的环保机构和部门。(e) 各级政府也做出了重大的努力，动员人民因地制宜地开展改善生态环境的工作。

Interpretation: The Government of China has attached great importance to environmental protection, *and* has listed environmental protection and population control as fundamental national policies. The State Council, which is the Central Government, has promulgated a series of regulation and measures for environmental protection *and* at the same time bolstered government environmental protection departments at all levels. *Moreover*, local governments have also made great efforts to organize people to improve the environment in the light of local conditions.

In example (2), it is obvious that there is a parallel relation between mutually strengthening premises in an inference between segment (a) and (b), between segment (c) and (d), and between (e) and the preceding sentence. And this relation is not revealed through the presence of DMs in the Chinese speech. So '*and*' and '*moreover*' should be added in the English interpretation in order to fulfill the inferential relations.

In example (3) and (4), '*even if*' and '*but*' are omitted in the interpretation while the meaning of the utterance is conveyed completely.

(3) *Even if* you go there, there won't be any results.

Interpretation: 你去也白去。

(4) I'm awfully sorry, *but* I seem to have mislaid your silk scarf.

真抱歉，好像我不知道吧你的围巾搁到哪儿了。

Starting from this type of problems that occur in interpreting tasks, the author intends to explore the phenomenon of DMs and propose possible solutions or principles for such problems. The author holds that Relevance Theory (RT) developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson provides a good theoretic framework under which DMs could be best analyzed and the interpreting of DMs between Chinese and English could be addressed. This thesis attempts to explore the explanatory power and application of Relevance Theory in interpreting, as a special act of communication.

The thesis contains five chapters including the introduction and the conclusion. In Chapter 2, basic notions and central claims in Relevance Theory are introduced and an ostensive-inferential model of interpreting is proposed based on Relevance Theory. Chapter 3 centers on DMs under Relevance-theoretic framework - as semantic constraint on relevance and significance of DMs in verbal communication and more importantly in interpreting, and looks at the various problems occurring in the interpreting of DMs between Chinese and English. Chapter 4 attempts to present basic principles for addressing these problems.

Chapter 2 Relevance and interpreting

2.1 Relevance Theory: an overview

The publication of *Relevance: Communication and Cognitive* (Sperber and Wilson, 2001) by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (referred to as S&W later) represents the birth of Relevance Theory and the advent of a very influential pragmatic theory in contemporary linguistics study.

Relevance Theory is a cognitive psychological theory addressing human communication. It attempts to analyze communication, and more specifically verbal communication in terms of the interaction between human mind and outer world, and cooperation between interlocutors.

The core and essence of Relevance Theory is the Principle of Relevance. S & W argues that verbal communication is an ostensive-inferential act governed by one and single principal: the Principle of Relevance. That is, every act of ostensive communication automatically communicates *a presumption of relevance*. The content of the presumption of relevance is:

- (a) The ostensive stimulus is relevant enough to be worth the audience's attention and
- (b) What is communicated is that to the best of the communicator's knowledge.

The principle of relevance is a spontaneous and biologically rooted in human cognition, and in other words inherent in human psychology. "The

principle of relevance applies without exception: Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of relevance” (Sperber and Wilson, 1986:162).

The principle of relevance guides hearers in the identification of their interlocutor’s *intended* message. Furthermore, S & W defined a two-fold distinction between *informative intention* (a first-order intention to inform the hearer) and *communicative intention* (a second-order intention making manifest the intention to inform the hearer).

Furthermore, the concept of optimal relevance is crucial to Relevance Theory. The degree of relevance is assessed in terms of contextual effects and processing effort. Optimal relevance means:

- (a) The ostensive stimulus is relevant enough to for it to be worth the addressee’s effort to process it.
- (b) The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator’s abilities and preferences. (S&W, 2001:270)

Relevance Theory has witnessed two decades of development since its birth in the late 1980’s. Relevance Theory has been extensively discussed and studied to the extent that a sub-branch of Pragmatics, Cognitive Pragmatics, is supposed to be established. It has also been introduced into the research of other branches of language studies including semantics, literary studies, and language learning and teaching and even into other disciplines such as psychology, philosophy, and even advertising.

Since its introduction into China in the late 1980’s, Relevance Theory has attracted more and more attention in the community of foreign language

teaching and research. Pragmaticians and other researchers in China have till now conducted research in areas including introductions to and reviews on Relevance Theory, comparative studies between Relevance Theory and Gricean Pragmatics, and studies on the application of Relevance Theory.

Attempts have been made to apply Relevance Theory to the study of related disciplines in order to develop new approaches to them. Professor He Ziran, for example, has proposed, based on Relevance Theory, the triadic relation theory of translation, which was acknowledged by Professor Wang Zongyan, one of the most distinguished scholars in China.

In this study, the author attempts to apply Relevance Theory to the study of interpreting. Quite a number of translation theorists have attempted to apply Relevance Theory to the study of translation and in their research, and have reached a common ground: linguistic theories have profound implications and guiding significance for the study of translation. Here in this paper “interpreting” is discussed under the context of translation, therefore all the achievements made in “translation” could also be adopted in the research of interpreting. Translation and interpreting have the same core purpose of facilitating communication between different languages. The author will not look into the differences between interpreting and translation in the discussion of DMs interpreting.

Moreover, in this paper the discussion of “interpreting” is restricted to consecutive interpreting between Chinese and English and professional interpreting performed in a professional setting as opposed to non-professional interpreting such as “occasional help given to friends, relatives, or tourists during visits, sightseeing, shopping, etc” (Gile,

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