

On Coping Tactics for Culture-Specific Metaphors in Interpretation for China's Global Communication from Cognitive Perspective

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This paper tends to apply the cognitive approach to the study of Interpretation for China's Global Communication (ICGC). In light of theories on cognitive metaphor, the paper proposes some coping tactics for culture-specific metaphors in ICGC and probes into influences of different coping tactics on the transformation of the culture-specific metaphor into the cultural sharing metaphor and the preservation of Chinese cultural images through case analysis, illustrating cognitive creativity of the interpreter in ICGC in their selecting coping tactics. Furthermore, some caliber of the interpreter in ICGC is put forward. The research, in the context of "Chinese culture going global", has been conducted in hope of guiding the practice of ICGC.

Keywords: Interpretation for China's Global Communication, culture-specific metaphor, cognitive approach to ICGC, cognitive metaphor, cognitive creativity

Introduction

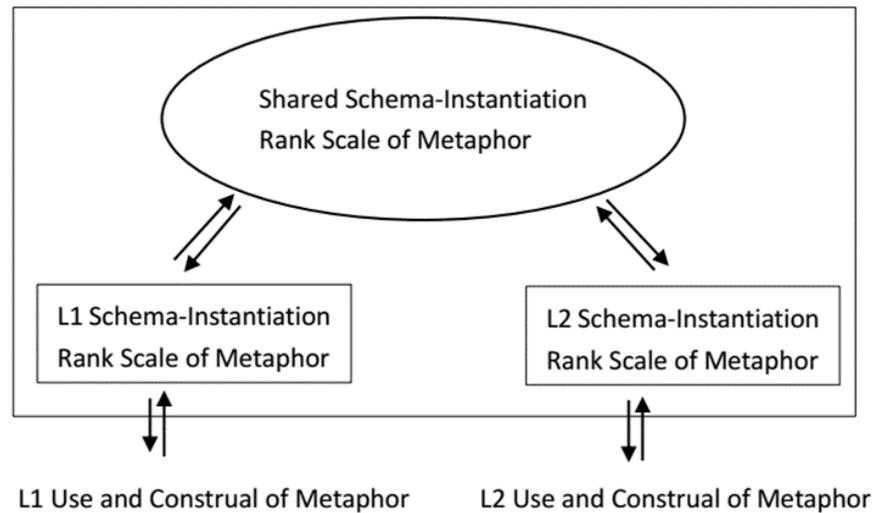
China's international publicity, usually in the press conference, international exhibition, tourism promotion meeting, etc., aims at making the voice of China widely heard by the international audience, which is of profound significance to our national image and international reputation. Interpreting activities related with China's international publicity can be classified as Interpretation for China's Global Communication (ICGC). In light of the objective of international publicity, ICGC has uniqueness in both contents and language forms besides general characteristics of interpreting. Specifically, in terms of contents, importance should be attached to conveying national values to an international audience so that Chinese value and ideology can be more accessible; on the other hand, language forms have to be audience-oriented, or rather they must be adjusted to the thinking mode of foreigners so as to make cultural transmission from weak culture to strong culture more efficient (Wang, 2007). Since absolute faithfulness to the speaker would be the stumbling blocks of ICGC, the interpreter should exert their subjectivity, giving full play to their initiative and creativity with instancy and current time of interpreting activities taken into account (Ren, 2010). That is particularly reflected in interpreting culture-specific metaphors with rich Chinese cultural characteristics in ICGC when the interpreter should try to transfer national cultural characteristics in a creative way more acceptable by the international audience on the premise of accurately reproducing senses of the speaker.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) proposed that metaphor should not only be regarded as a deviant rhetoric device but rather a universal cognitive thinking mode in *Metaphors We Live By*. Since then quite a few scholars at home and abroad have probed into translation strategies of metaphorical expressions under the guidance of the thinking mode, which overcomes the limitations of traditional studies from the perspective of rhetoric and elevates relevant studies from the expression level to cognition level. Nevertheless, applicability of the translation strategies concluded from those studies are sometimes too broad to reflect the complex and dynamic part of metaphor in the interpreting activity, let alone the cognitive creativity of interpreters in ICGC. But a CNKI and EBSCO search shows that papers combining the cognitive metaphoric mechanism with interpretation studies are still in a limited quantity, much less the study applying the cognitive approach to ICGC. Thus, the study on coping tactics for culture-specific metaphors in ICGC from the cognitive perspective is of great significance not only to transmit Chinese cultural characteristics in ICGC at the practical level but also to broaden the research space of ICGC at the theoretical level.

Selecting Coping Tactics for Culture-Specific Metaphors in ICGC from the Cognitive Perspective

Theories on Cognitive Metaphor

From the cognitive perspective, metaphor refers to the cognitive process of understanding and creating metaphorical expressions in one's mind, which is a thinking mode we rely on every day. Under the guidance of the metaphorical thinking mode, Lakoff and Johnson proposed Conceptual Metaphor Theory, analyzing cognitive characteristics of metaphor in essence. According to the theory, intangible and abstract concepts in the "source domain" can be understood and expressed by tangible and intuitive concepts in the "target domain" through "cross-domain mapping", and different metaphorical phenomena have the same cross-domain mapping pattern as a basis, which is defined as "conceptual metaphor" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The "conceptual metaphor" underlying metaphorical expressions is so deeply rooted in our minds that we often take it for granted (Lan, 2009). Tan Yesheng (2014) further pointed out that conceptual metaphor is systematic representation based on the schema-instantiation rank scale, and the metaphorical representation system is bi-directionally in interaction with the use and construal of metaphor, besides, different sociocultural environments would lead to discrepancies in embodied experience and ways of construal, therefore, there are both similarities and differences in metaphorical representation systems of two languages, which catalyzes cognitive creativity of the interpreter. To be specific, the two systems may share some metaphor schema rather than instantiation, or in them some embodied experience may activate different metaphor schemas due to different degrees of salience. Further, Tan Yesheng (2014) proposed the bilingual representation system of metaphor (as the diagram below shows), illustrating the freedom and constraints of creative translation at the cognitive level.



Cognitive Creativity in Selecting Coping Tactics for Culture-Specific Metaphors

According to the bilingual representation system of metaphor mentioned above, by the standard of sharing some schema and instantiation with the metaphor representation system in the target language or not, Chinese metaphorical expressions with rich and profound cultural connotations fall into two categories at the cognitive level—the culture-specific metaphor and the cultural sharing metaphor. Due to discrepancies of embodied experience in different sociocultural environments, the schema of the culture-specific metaphor could not be activated for lack of salience or different instantiation may be sanctioned in the English metaphoric representation system and ambiguous construal might occur in the target culture. Thus, when interpreting the culture-specific metaphor, the interpreter, in light of the objective of international publicity, should conform to thinking modes of the international audience and try to transmit national cultural characteristics in a creative way. That creativity is reflected in selecting and applying coping tactics, specifically, proper tactics could not only promote the transformation of culture-specific metaphors into cultural sharing metaphors but also help preserving Chinese cultural images to the utmost under constraints of various interference factors such as current time of the interpreting activity, disparities in languages and cultures, composition of the interpreter's bilingual metaphorical representation system, etc. The cognitive basis of the metaphorical transformation and creativity of the interpreter is: The bilingual metaphorical representation system is constantly in change because of dynamic interactions with the use and construal of metaphor. And the two sub-systems of Chinese schema-instantiation rank scale of metaphor and the shared schema-instantiation rank scale of metaphor are interconnected in diverse ways. It is the interpreter's cognitive creativity that promotes the transformation of culture-specific metaphors into cultural sharing metaphors and expansion of the shared schema-instantiation rank scale of metaphor, thereby increasing paths of diversified interaction inside the bilingual metaphorical representation system and chances of creating new expressions with Chinese cultural characteristics, which forms a virtuous circulation system.

Case Analysis of Selecting Coping Tactics for Culture-Specific Metaphors in ICGC

At the level of expression, coping tactics for culture-specific metaphors in ICGC can be classified into three categories according to degrees of preserving Chinese cultural images in the transformation of

culture-specific metaphors into cultural sharing metaphors: coping tactics for completely preserving the cultural image, partly preserving the cultural image and deleting the cultural image. Correspondingly at the cognitive level, the coping tactics of indicating concepts in the target domain and composing a new schema are of help to completely and partly preserving cultural images while the coping tactics of replacing the schema, deleting the schema and adopting a new instantiation fail to achieve that effect. The following, from the perspective of cognitive metaphor, probes into different influences of coping tactics on promoting the transformation of the culture-specific metaphor into the cultural sharing metaphor and preservation of Chinese cultural images through case analysis, thereby illustrating the interpreter's creativity when picking out the optimized coping tactic under the guidance of international publicity's objective and the constraints of various interference factors.

Completely Preserving the Cultural Image—Indicating Concepts in the Target Domain

Xi Jinping: 一段时间以来, 我们大力查处腐败案件, 坚持“老虎”“苍蝇”一起打, 就是要顺应人民要求。这其中没有什么权力斗争, 没有什么“纸牌屋”。

Interpreter: In our vigorous campaign against corruption, we have punished both “tigers” and “flies”, corrupt officials irrespective of ranking, in response to our people's demand. This has nothing to do with power struggle. It's nothing like what you see in House of Cards (the speech made by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the welcoming banquet held in Seattle in 2015).

President Xi Jinping referred to high-ranking and lower-ranking officials involved in corruption as “tigers” and “flies” with a view to showing the international audience the determination and high-spirit of Chinese government to fight against corruption. The cultural images of “tigers” and “flies” with distinctive features of Chinese political discourse originate from Chairman Mao Zedong's philosophy that anti-corruption could be viewed as hunting tigers irrespective of size. Although there is the shared metaphorical schema of mapping “high-ranking” and “low-ranking” people or things with concepts of “tigers” and “flies” in the Chinese and English languages, the international audience in different socio-cultural environments, on one hand, cannot quickly associate “tigers” and “flies” with “high-ranking” and “low-ranking” people in the target domain through cross-domain mapping, on the other hand, they may even be reminded of tigers' ferociousness and flies' low landing speed which are salient in western cultures, thereby causing the misinterpretation. With the purpose of promoting understanding of the international audience and meanwhile conveying Chinese cultural characteristics, the interpreter adopted the coping tactic of indicating concepts in the target domain and created the expression of “both ‘tigers’ and ‘flies’, corrupt officials irrespective of ranking” so as to enhance the effectiveness of ICGC.

Partly Preserving the Cultural Image—Composing a New Schema

Speaker: 博彩旅游业是澳门的经济动脉。

Interpreter: Gaming tourism is the pulsing heart of Macao's economy (Macau Tourism Promotion Meeting of the International Travel Fair in 2016).

In this case, the speaker mapped the concept of “key components” with “arteries”, demonstrating the significance of lottery tourism industry to Macau's economy. That metaphorical schema stems from the traditional Chinese medicine culture advocating the heart is the central part of storing vital essence and arteries that pass through viscera organs are essential to Qi and blood in the whole body, yet that is not shared in the English culture insisting it is only the heart that plays a dominant role in life. Hoping to convey the traditional

Chinese medicine culture to the international audience, the interpreter created a new schema composed of the Chinese metaphorical schema of “arteries” mapping “key components” and the shared metaphorical schema of “heart” mapping “key components”, and interpreted that as “the pulsing heart” by adopting the instantiation of the schema that “arteries” maps “key components”, which promotes the transformation of the culture-specific metaphor into the cultural sharing metaphor and meanwhile partly preserves the Chinese cultural image.

Deleting the Cultural Image

(1) Replacing the Schema

Li Keqiang: 虽然中美关系几十年来历经风风雨雨，但是一直向前走，为什么？

Interpreter: Over the last decades, the China US relationship, despite some ups and downs, has generally moved forward. Why? (The Premier’s Press Conference in 2013)

Premier Li Keqiang referred to “changes of Sino-US relationship” using the expression of “rains and winds” in that there is the schema of “weather condition” mapping “one’s situation” in Chinese. However, that schema is not shared in the metaphorical representation system of most western receivers, therefore, the interpreter rebelled against the Chinese metaphorical schema and replaced it with the cultural shared schema of “directions” mapping “situation”, creatively interpreting that as “ups and downs”. Though the interpreter under constraints of various interference factors failed to transfer the Chinese cultural image, she tried to preserve the vividness of the metaphorical expression, improving comprehension of the international audience.

(2) Deleting the Schema

Li Keqiang: 我们要有壮士断腕的决心，言出必行，说到做到，决不明放暗不放，避重就轻，更不能搞变相游戏。

Interpreter: We will keep our promise and match our words with action. We will never secretly hold on powers or shield away from real difficult issues. We will never play any games to get around the requirement of the reform (The Premier’s Press Conference in 2013).

The metaphor of “cutting the wrist like brave warriors” deriving from the Chinese allusion indicates that the warrior bitten on the wrist by a snake has to cut his wrist off at once in case that poisons spread throughout the body, which means making a prompt and resolute decision. The Chinese metaphorical schema of “cutting some body part” mapping “expressing one’s will” finds no counterpart in the English metaphorical representation system. Under constraints of the limited capacity of the interpreter’s metaphorical shared schema-instantiation rank scale, urgency of the interpreting activity, low degree of interconnection of the metaphor itself, etc., it would take up much energy for the interpreter to compose a new schema for partly preserving Chinese cultural images or to substitute with other shared schema for reproducing vividness of the metaphorical expression, moreover, the metaphor could even be misinterpreted as negative implications of “self-injury”, “violence”, “bloodiness”, etc., in the English language, which is to the disadvantage of constructing a good national image. Therefore, giving priority to accurately conveying the speaker’s intention and avoiding the risk of misinterpretation, the interpreter conservatively adopted the coping tactic of deleting the schema.

(3) Adopting a New Instantiation

Li Keqiang: 改革贵在行动，喊破嗓子不如甩开膀子。

Interpreter: Talking the talk is not as good as walking the walk (The Premier’s Press Conference in 2013).

In this case, the Chinese expressions of “talking at the top of throat” and “rolling up sleeves” map the concepts of “windbaggary” and “taking action” in the target domain, meaning that Chinese government must earnestly carry out the reform policy. As the proverb of “action speaks louder than words” in English shows, the English and Chinese languages share the schemas of “speaking mapping windbaggary” and “limb movement mapping taking action”. However, the schemas will sanction different instantiations in two social cultures because embodied experience differs. Thus, if the interpreter had continued to adopt the Chinese instantiation and interprets that as “talking at the top of throat is not as good as rolling up sleeves”, it would have been unlikely for trigger words of “throat” and “sleeves” to activate the higher-level schema in English. Therefore, the interpreter adopted the new instantiation of “taking steps” mapping “taking action” which is shared by two languages, thereby associating with the English idiom of “walking the walk” and “talking the talk”. The vivid idiom realized the transformation of the culture-specific metaphor into the cultural sharing metaphor even though it abandoned those Chinese cultural images due to instancy and current time of the interpreting activity, hence, the interpreter played the subjective role to some extent by adopting a new instantiation.

Conclusion

ICGC, as an essential element in international publicity, reflects the level of one nation’s foreign exchanges as well as construction of the humanistic environment (Cai, 2009). Thus, with an increasingly more important role played by China in the international arena, it is crucial to cultivate more qualified interpreters in ICGC. As is analyzed in the last chapters, when encountering Chinese culture-specific metaphors in international publicity, the interpreter, guided by ICGC’s aims of conveying senses and international publicity, should not only be able to accurately convey the speaker’s intention but also transmit national cultural characteristics in a creative way more acceptable by the international audience. The above, coupled with interpreting’s general characteristics of irreversibility, instancy, high pressure, etc., sets a higher demand for interpreters in ICGC. Firstly, the interpreter must have high political integrity. To be specific, on the premise of publicizing the facts from China’s standpoint, the interpreter acting as the media of foreign exchanges should pay attention to safeguarding our good national image and spreading more national cultural values to the international audience. Secondly, the interpreter should enlarge their bilingual metaphorical representation system and especially the shared schema-instantiation rank scale of metaphor inside it so that the free space of creative interpretation could thus be expanded, then the representation system and rank scale are in turn enlarged, and paths of diversified interconnection are further increased, which tends to form a virtuous circulation system. Thirdly, only when the interpreter with the cross-cultural consciousness has a full understanding of disparities and similarities in two cultures can they distinguish the culture-specific metaphor before selecting proper coping tactics creatively. Moreover, the interpreter in ICGC should be also equipped with what are required by all other interpreting activities, such as excellent language competence, extensive encyclopedic knowledge, rapid reaction, strong pressure tolerance, and so on.

In order to enhance the effectiveness of ICGC, the interpreter qualified with the above caliber should give full play to their creativity and select appropriate coping tactics for culture-specific metaphors. On the premise of accurately conveying the speaker’s intention, proper coping tactics can not only promote transformation of the culture-specific metaphor into the cultural sharing metaphor, but preserve national cultural images of metaphors to the utmost. To be specific, coping tactics of indicating concepts in the target domain and

composing a new schema are of help to completely or partly preserving cultural images, while coping tactics of adopting a new schema or instantiation and deleting the schema fail to do that. Besides the objective of international publicity, other interference factors such as current time and instancy of the interpreting activity, objective cultural differences of two languages, and composition of the bilingual metaphorical representation system also affect their selection of coping tactics. It is the interpreter's creativity in their selecting coping tactics that promotes the diversified interconnection inside the bilingual metaphorical representation system so that chances of creating more interpretations with Chinese cultural characteristics are further increased, which forms a virtuous circle. Nevertheless, it is challenging for the interpreter constrained by various interference factors to weigh pros and cons of the coping tactics before picking out the optimized one, thus, cultivation of interpreters in ICGC should be regarded as an essential task in current interpreting teaching. In order to give some enlightenment to the interpreting practice and talent cultivation, the research is conducted with the expectation of seeing more outstanding interpreters in ICGC who are competent to tell China's story and make China's voice widely heard throughout the world.

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