## ATINER CONFERENCE PRESENTATION SERIES No: LNG2019-0169

# ATINER's Conference Paper Proceedings Series LNG2019-0169 Athens, 13 December 2019

# The Application of Pragmatic Theory to Translation

Xuedi Sun & Dianyong Zhu

Athens Institute for Education and Research 8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10683 Athens, Greece

ATINER's conference paper proceedings series are circulated to promote dialogue among academic scholars. All papers of this series have been blind reviewed and accepted for presentation at one of ATINER's annual conferences according to its acceptance policies (http://www.atiner.gr/acceptance).

© All rights reserved by authors.

# **ATINER's Conference Paper Proceedings Series**

LNG2019-0169 Athens, 13 December 2019

ISSN: 2529-167X

**Xuedi Sun,** Student, Harbin Engineering University, China **Dianyong Zhu,** Associate Professor, Harbin Engineering University, China

# The Application of Pragmatic Theory to Translation

# **ABSTRACT**

Pragmatics is the study of language use and comprehension. It studies not only the process of the speaker's use of language and external context to express meaning, but also the decoding process of the speaker's utterances. The study of translation is a study of the translator's understanding of the original text and the reconstruction of the original meaning in translation. Both of them, language understanding and language expression, have common research objects. The former pays more attention to oral communication and its dynamic characteristics, while the latter pays more attention to text and written language. However, this difference does not prevent translation theory researchers from using pragmatic theories to explore translation activities. Written discourse and oral utterance are equally communicative and dynamic. In writing, the author takes the reader's receptive ability and cognitive context into account and shows his intention to the reader through discourse. If the author thinks that the reader is not familiar with a certain knowledge or mood and will affect the reader's interpretation and understanding of the work, he will write more details in this respect, and vice versa. By reading the author's works, readers can acquire new knowledge, fresh feelings, experience, and resonance with the author, even be influenced by the work and take some action to successfully complete the communication between the author and reader.

Keywords: pragmatics; translation; communication

Acknowledgments: Our thanks to Harbin Engineering University for allowing us to display our research in this paper which is funded by the International Exchange Program of Harbin Engineering University for Innovation-oriented Talents Cultivation.

## Introduction

Like semantics, pragmatics also studies meaning, but it does not study the meaning of the abstract language system itself. It studies the meaning of the communication and understanding in a specific communicative situation and the process of understanding and communication. Translation explores the translator's ability to interpret and reconstruct the original meaning. Both have a common research object, namely language understanding and expression. But the former pays more attention to oral communication and its dynamic characteristics, while the latter is concerned with text and written language. By reading the author's work, the reader gains fresh feelings, resonates with the author, and even takes some action.

# The Importance of Using Pragmatics in Translation

From the development history of translation, it is constantly absorbing theoretical results from other disciplines. It is continuous evolution and expansion of translation that make the translation theories continuously enriching and developing, which better guide the translation work. At the same time, after decades of development, pragmatics is being applied to language teaching, language acquisition, cognitive linguistics, translation and other fields. More and more scholars are paying attention to the guiding role of its theory. At the same time, the relationship between pragmatics and translation is getting closer and closer. The research results obtained in various fields of pragmatics can provide scientific and micro-pragmatic analysis methods for translation studies, such as presupposition, language politeness, conversational meaning, relevance theory, discourse coherence, discourse structure, speech act theory. Pragmatic theories can help solve various problems in language use in translation and can therefore be applied to translation.

Pragmatics has a strong explanatory power for translation, which enables us to interpret many contradictions in translation from a new perspective; the fusion of translation and pragmatics will provide a new model for translation theory, and provide theory and construction for translation studies. In addition, pragmatics knowledge can help translators better understand the meaning of the original text, also rely on the help of pragmatics knowledge when reproducing the original meaning in the target language. It is also crucial to convey "pragmatics meaning in a particular context" in translation. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce pragmatics theory into translation, which is in line with its own development requirements. The use of pragmatics theory in translation can better guide translation practice, and it can also broaden the application scope of pragmatic theory, so as to better test the validity of pragmatics theory.

# The Application of Pragmatics Theory in Translation

# Context Analysis

One of the core concepts of pragmatics is context analysis. People use language to communicate in everyday communication. In communication, there will be a certain context, so it is especially important to analyze the context. Therefore, context analysis is an important part of translation. The context here encompasses the context of communication, nature, participants, and context. The analysis of context in English translation will help us understand the profound meaning that the speaker at the time is to express. The object of pragmatics research is not the static meaning in words or sentences, but the behavior in specific contexts. It is a specific dynamic meaning, in other words, the language user is in the specified context. The pragmatics meaning of a word or sentence given in it.

To understand the correct meaning in translation, one needs to fully analyze the context, instead of simply interpreting the literal meaning, so that the translated translation is more smooth and the reader can correctly understand. To the speech intentions and deep emotions that the speaker wants to express.

# Association Principle

Relevance theory believes that any discourse is related. The process of discourse understanding is to find the process of association. If there is no association in a small context, it is necessary to use a larger context until the association of discourse is found. Make the words have a contextual effect in this context. According to the principle of association, any communicative behavior conveys the assumptions and expectations of the best correlation. The hearer always uses the least cognitive effort to obtain the maximum contextual effect, and derives the communicative intention of the speaker.

Relevance theory regards translation as the communicative process of explicit reasoning. In this process, translators should make full use of various information knowledge in their own cognitive contexts to find out the best correlations contained in them, and thoroughly understand through reasoning. The original meaning, but also to take into account the reader's cognitive ability and acceptability, to provide the greatest degree of relevance, to obtain the best context effect. Therefore, the best relevance is the goal that the translator strives to achieve, and it is also the principle standard of translation research. The best relevance, that is, the translator expects the target reader to obtain sufficient contextual effects when deriving the original author's intention and understanding the translation without making unnecessary processing efforts. Therefore, the successful translation is the original author's intention and the target language reader's expectation is best related to the original text in the relevant aspects of the cognitive environment, which can help the target readers better understand the original intention.

# Language Behavior Theory

The British philosopher and linguist John Lanshaw Austin's Speech Act Theory puts forward a three-point statement of speech act. He believes that all the sentences have the three words of speech, words, and words, that is, X (in words), meaning Y (in words), and Z (in words). Austin divides all sentences into two categories: expressions and sentences, and sentences that contain verbs (that is, the main verbs in the sentence) are called explicit sentences, and sentences that do not contain verbs. It is called implicit application. According to Austin's theory, the basic units of language communication are behaviors such as statements, requests, orders, etc., and not just sentences. The speaker performs speech acts through sentences and contexts, and produces communicative effects on the hearers. The key concept in his speech act theory is the implication.

Pragmatic translation is to see the meaning of the original text in the context, the pragmatic intention of the translation, that is, the intention of the "acting by words" in the speech act theory or the intention of the speech, that is, the power of the extravagance, the meaning of implied or explicit Express it clearly, and at the same time choose the appropriate translation language to express the image or pragmatic meaning of the original text. According to the theory of speech act, in the process of translation, the translator not only understands the literal meaning of the original text, but also clarifies the original intention of the original author and the effect and effect on the reader.

# **Translation Practice from the Perspective of Pragmatics**

In the process of translation, the misunderstanding of the semantic level of the original text will cause the reader to misinterpret or not understand the original intention, and then turn into the wrong translation, and lose the use of communication. Communication not only has the ability to recognize the object of reference, but also the ability to interpret specific references, the ability to integrate the relationship between two contexts, and therefore the coherence of the text. In turn, the meaning of the reference vocabulary is derived. The identification of the referee object must also take into account the perspective of the recognizer.

## Referential Object

Different languages are used in different design ranges. They are subject to specific social culture. Scholars believe that courtesy is extremely reciprocal, and there are differences in the way and scope of polite expression in different languages. This explains the translation. Sometimes the polite language focuses on accuracy. The translator should highly restore the author's work and accurately express his thoughts and feelings in the work. Therefore, in the translation, the translation staff should have a detailed understanding of the background, cultural environment and reasoning habits of writing. To the fullest extent, the author's intention should be fully demonstrated. In the process of reconstruction, it is

necessary to fully integrate the translation of the human language cultural difference.

# Cultural Pragmatic Equivalence

The translation community has long been affected by literal translation and free translation. If the translation staff neglects the differences between the source language and the translated language in the expression of the protocol, the cognitive meaning of the cultural context and the recipient of the translation is not fully understood, and the surface meaning in the original text is directly translated. Not only will the essence of the original work be greatly discounted, but it will also mislead the reader's understanding, increase the reader's understanding difficulty, cause certain troubles, and reduce the confidence of his reading works.

# Social Pragmatic Equivalence

The equivalent of social and cultural level is called social pragmatic equivalence, which is relatively difficult to achieve equivalent, and requires a higher cultural heritage for translators. It must have a deep understanding of both cultures. Before translation, translators need to understand and evaluate the audience's awareness and a specific cultural phenomenon or mood. If the translator is unfamiliar with it, the translator can replace the more difficult to understand in the original text in the phenomenon or the mood that the reader is familiar with in the translation. Present the image in the original text in another easy-to-accept form. If the translator thinks that the reader can accept such an image or the corresponding artistic conception, or can grasp the true intention of the author through the context, the translator can display the content in the form of direct translation.

#### **Conclusions**

The theory of pragmatics has important guiding significance for translation. The pragmatic translation view focuses on how to convey information that the original author wants to convey to the original reader in the original context, and to reproduce the problem to the target reader in the context of the translated language.

The translator is the bridge between the original author and the target reader. How to build the bridge also needs a correct translation concept, which will impact translator's evaluation of translation quality, thus subtly affecting the translation practice. The pragmatic translation view has certain reference value to the translator's translation practice and translation evaluation criteria. However, it has application limitations. Now there is no translation theory that can be applied to all texts, and no translation view can guide all types of text translation. Pragmatic translation is no exception. Although it has explanatory power for applied text, the power is relatively weak. To improve translation quality, it is necessary to analyze

## ATINER CONFERENCE PRESENTATION SERIES No: LNG2019-0169

the specific problems of the translators, and to adopt a translation strategy flexibly according to the translation purpose.

# References

Levinson S C. Pragmatics [M]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Austin, J.L. How To Do Things With Words [M]. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.

Baker, M. In other words: A coursebook on translation. London: Routledge, 1992.

Gutt, E.A. Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context [M]. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 1999, 2000.

Hatim, B & I. Masion. The Translator as Communicator [M]. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.

Hickey, L. The Pragmatics of Translation [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 1998.

Leech, G.N. Principles of Pragmatics [M]. London: Longman, 1983.

Linda, D. Book Reviews of The Translator as Communicator; The Prangmatics of Translation; and Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context [J]. The Translator, 2001(2):309-315.

Newmark, P.A Textbook of Translation [M]. New York: Prentice Hall, 1988.

Searle, J.R. Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language [M]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.

Sperber, D. & D. Wilson. Relevance: Communication and Cognition [M].Oxford: Blackwell, 1986, 1995.