

BUSINESS TRANSLATION: AN ANALYSIS OF CHINESE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The paper examines various aspects of Business translation in the context of language pair Chinese-English. The content analysis method is applied to qualitatively analyze the research available in this domain in both English and Chinese language. Approx 30 research papers/sources were collected and analyzed to get an overview of business translation. Besides English sources, Chinese language sources were also translated and incorporated in this study. Paper summarizes that Translation of Business texts is playing a crucial role at the international level in establishing smooth business relations among nations. Business texts as a form of informative texts are characterized by conciseness, accuracy, objectiveness, practicality, briefness, and courtesy. Translators are rarely criticized for the beauty of their language, but they may face problems at a single mistake occurring in meaning, resulting in a heavy loss. In most cases, business texts have their fixed forms, and the transference of business information must be done in a very short period of time. Business and technical translation account for the biggest proportion of translation work currently being commissioned by the industry, far exceeding the translation of literary texts in terms of both volume and financial worth. Existing principles of translation are rarely applicable to Chinese-English business translation. Translation principles of "faithfulness, exactness, and consistency" and "smoothness" are undoubtedly applicable in business English translation. The loyalty principle of Skopos theory has a meaningful implication in Chinese-English business translation. In business translation, domestication prevails over foreignization. Paper has got academic value as it presents an overall view of Business translation in the Chinese context.

Key Words: Chinese, English, Business, translation, domestication, courtesy

Introduction

In today's era of economic globalization, we witness the rapid development of business cooperation among nations. Translation services are expanding every passing day and translation of Business texts is playing a crucial role at the international level in establishing smooth business relations among nations. It is a tool to overcome the hurdles in cross-cultural communication. Business texts as a form of informative texts are characterized by conciseness,

accuracy, objectiveness, practicality, briefness, and courtesy. In most cases, business texts have their fixed forms, and the transference of business information must be done in a very short period of time. Translators are rarely criticized for the beauty of their language, but they may face problems at a single mistake occurring in meaning, resulting in a heavy loss. In business translation, domestication prevails over foreignization. Existing principles of translation are rarely applicable to Chinese-English business translation. All too often, therefore, business translation, indispensable to China's economic development, has hardly any principles to follow...the author puts forward the view that the major principles of business translation should be "faithfulness, exactness, and consistency". (Liu Fagong). This paper aims at analyzing the current status of business translation and summarizing the theoretical discourses in this domain of translation. It also analyzes the problems in the translation of business contracts.

Business Translation

In the past 10 years, the trend of economic globalization has put forward higher requirements for the training of English talents in Chinese universities. College English talents with a single knowledge and language skills can no longer meet the practical needs of international business communication and practice. The subject integration, ability comprehension and integration of business English majors are in line with the characteristics of the quality training of English talents in the new era, which is the general trend. As a core course in business English, business translation is closely related to international business activities such as foreign trade, investment promotion, foreign labor contracting and contracts, and international finance.

Shi Chunrang and Bai Yan regarded business translation as "all types of translation and interpretation related to business English."

According to Olohan, "commercial translation" is "the translation of product data generated and used in business functions and product workflow."

Lie says "any translation work undertaken and required directly or indirectly for any commercial purpose. Therefore, the text translation activities generated in the middle of this series of processes are all included in "commercial translation". She also mentioned that commercial translation also includes "Technical translation" and "legal translation" which is basically consistent with this.

We believe that "commercial translation" can refer to any business-related translation activity and has a wider scope; while "business translation" is a sub-category of commercial translation and has a smaller scope. Such as business correspondence, business advertising, company promotional text, etc., excluding scientific and technological translation and legal translation. In this way, we distinguish between "business translation" and "commercial translation" to make the meaning and extension of "business translation" clear.

Significance of Business Texts

The economy and business are developing rapidly in today's era. Business is playing an increasingly key role in the economic development and business prosperity of all nations. In this era of economic globalization, business texts are omnipresent in our society. We use them in almost every field of business cooperation and in every aspect of our life and are in fact becoming the most common and most significantly used texts. Translation of business texts, as a means to bridge cultural and information gaps between nations, has been playing a very important role in promoting global economic and business development, and China in particular benefits a great deal from the translation of business texts. Business and technical translation

account for the biggest proportion of translation work currently being commissioned by the industry, far exceeding the translation of literary texts in terms of both volume and financial worth (Venuti 1995). Unsurprisingly, the importance of business translation and hence its teaching has increasingly been recognized in the translation training community.

In order to better meet the needs of students, it is imperative that curricular innovations be designed and implemented. A social constructivist approach is adopted here to inform suggested curricular changes. Furthermore, on a practical level, a task-based teaching approach is adopted to further aid the teaching of business translation. (Li)

Liu Fagong writes: “Existing principles of translation are rarely applicable to Chinese-English business translation. All too often, therefore, business translation—indispensable to China’s economic development—has hardly any principles to follow. With examples taken from Chinese-English business translations, the author puts forward the view that the major principles of business translation should be “faithfulness, exactness, and consistency”. In explicating this point, the author stresses that the special features of business English account for the variability of translation principles (Liu Fagong)”.

After China’s entry into the WTO, under the influence of globalization, cross-border business exchanges have become increasingly frequent. Because there are certain obstacles in the communication between different cultures in different countries due to different languages, a large amount of business information needs to be transmitted to each other through translation. This information includes corporate introductions, commercial advertisements, product promotion, brand promotion, business meetings, investment promotion, foreign labor services, overseas investment, trade negotiations, contract signing, international finance, foreign-related insurance, and international transportation. (Zhang Yaoxia 10)

As a form of informative texts, the aim of business texts is making certain facts clear and information passed through. Generally speaking, the language of informative texts is characterized by conciseness, accuracy, objectiveness, practicality, briefness and courtesy. It is therefore essential that translators of business texts preserve these characteristics when they reproduce them in the target language.

So far, not many Chinese translation scholars have paid attention to the above mentioned special features of business texts. Therefore, it can be said that the study of business text translation is not much satisfactory, and the traditional theories appear incapable of guiding translators of business texts, which means more research is required in this field of translation.

The Characteristics of Business Texts

As a significant form of pragmatic texts, business texts are targeted at making certain facts clear and message passed through.

Generally, business texts have their fixed forms, courtesy style and the passage of business information is required to be done in a very restricted period of time.

Let’s see some of the features of business language:

Lexical Features: As a part of English, most words of business English have the general character of English lexis. With some exceptions, such as some price terms fixed by international organizations, most of words are just familiar ones in English. Business English is much less confusing than literary English: and even daily English, and therefore finding equivalence for business English in the target language is much easier task. Most of words adopted in business

English in the same way have limited meanings and could be comprehended easily and clearly. However, there are unique features of the words in business English.

Frequent Use of Special Words and Terms:

Special terms have their special meanings in business English. These are peculiar and significant in translating business language.

Special terms	Business meaning
Proforma invoice	形式发票
Irrevocable letter of credit	不可撤销信用证
Clearance sale	清仓销价销售
Counter-offer	还盘
Premium	保险费

Common terms: These terms have a widest range of use in business English. They are equally used in both ordinary language and business language. But they have different meanings:

Wordbusiness meaning common meaning

document	单证、单据	文件
offer	报盘、发价	提供
security	担保、抵押品、保证金安全	
interest	利息	爱好、兴趣

Frequent Use of Abbreviations:

Another distinctive feature of business English is the use of abbreviated words, particularly in written documents and letters.

Acronyms	full name	meaning
WTO	World Trade Organization	世界贸易组织
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce	国际商会
IMF	International Monetary Fund	国际货币基金组织

Syntactical Features:

The two syntactical features of business language are:

- a) Frequent use of declarative sentences
- b) Prominence of long sentences instead,

Textual Features: When analyzed at textual level, business English has the following features.

Settled Format: Lexical and syntactic aspects always reflect the textual feature. In business English, a text is often made up of several settled parts which are closely related to the key issue. For example, in most business letters, the first part is the introduction, mentioning the purpose of writing the letter or the issue with mutual concerns.

For example:

On opening:

We refer to your order No 7 and regret to say that... 兹谈及你方 7 号订单事宜, 遗憾告知... In answer to your letter of... 兹复你们.....的来信

We are pleased to inform you that... 我们很高兴告知你们..

We have received your letter of. 我们已收到你们.....的来信。

We acknowledge receipt of your letter of ... 感谢你方来信询问.....

The last part is about the ending and complementary close.

On ending:

Looking forward to your early reply! Yours faithfully,

Please reply immediately! 即复为盼!

Yours faithfully,

Your early reply will be highly appreciated! 您若能尽早回复将不胜感戴

Yours sincerely,

Awaiting your immediate reply. 请即复。

Yours sincerely, (Zhang Xinhong, Liming, 2003)

These are the most commonly used openings and endings. Details of the issue follow these sentences. This part is the core of the letter and is always stated clearly and concisely. And if several issues are concerned, these issues would be enumerated in primary and secondary order.

For example: frequent-used sentences for establishing trade relation.

a. 我们愿与贵公司建立商务关系。

We are willing to establish trade relations with your company.

b. 我们希望与您建立业务往来。

Please allow us to express our hope of opening an account with you.

c. 我公司经营电子产品的进出口业务, 希望与贵方建立商务关系。

This corporation is specialized in handing the import and exports business in electronic products and wishes to enter into business relations with you.

For quotation:

a. 兹函请提供.....的报价。 We are writing to invite quotations for the supply of....

b. 请将定期供应.....之报价赐知。 Please let us have a quotation for the regular supply for....

c. 请将下列货品的最低价格赐知。 Kindly quote us your lowest prices for the goods listed below.

For inquiry: a. 随函寄上询价单一份。 We are enclosing here with an inquiry sheet.

b. 如果贵方对.....感兴趣, 请告具体询价。 If you are interested in our..., please let us know with a specific inquiry.

c. 一收到贵方具体询价单, 我方马上航空邮上样品册并报价。 Quotations and sample books will be airmailed to you upon receipt of your specific inquiry.

Formal and Courtesy Style: In business letters, Courtesy and tactful manner of communication is very important. Courtesy is an important language characteristic of international business letters. A letter written courteously can build a good and honest image in the eyes of the readers and they will happily cooperate with you and enthusiastically serve you. If we want to express our regrets or complaints, we need to voice politely and tactfully if we can't meet the requirements or conditions to our counterpart, or if we want to put forward our suggestions, hopes or requests, otherwise we may annoy our partner and subsequently lose the business. For example:

We have not received your payment of the balance of US \$5000.

We regret having to remind you that we have not received your payment of the balance of US \$5000.

You have to replace the damaged records.

We will appreciate it if you replace the damaged records.

Your letter is not clear at all, I cannot understand it.

If I understood your letter correctly, I would immediately accept your offer. (Zhang Xinhong, 173)

In these examples, the second sentence in each group appears to be much more polite and tactful and reflects the feature of manner of speaking in international business letters. While the first sentence in each group is expressed so directly as to appear a little impoliteness, which should be avoided in business letters. In Business English letters, when we are making an explanation, we are explaining with joy, willingness, thanks or regret to show our sincerity, politeness or consideration.

With the increasing frequency of commercial activities and international contacts, Business English has become imperative medium for international communication. Business letter, as an important branch of business English, plays a crucial role in international trade. (*Xue JIANG, Haibin GUO*)

Types of Business Text:

Zhang Yaoxia in his book entitled Business English Translation Course writes:

After China's entry into the WTO, under the influence of globalization, cross-border business exchanges have become increasingly frequent. Because there are certain obstacles in the communication between different cultures in different countries due to different languages, a large amount of business information needs to be transmitted to each other through translation. This information includes corporate introductions, commercial advertisements, product promotion, brand promotion, business meetings, investment promotion, foreign labor services, overseas investment, trade negotiations, contract signing, international finance, foreign-related insurance, and international transportation. (Zhang Yaoxia 10)

Cao, Shenyang mentions the following texts as main types of business texts:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Trademarks and Tradenames | 商标 商号 |
| b. Business Cards | 商务名片 |
| c. Advertisements | 广告词 |
| d. Product Instructions | 商品说明书 |
| e. Letters of Establishing Business Relations | 建交函 |
| f. Inquiry Letters | 询盘函 |
| g. Letters of Acceptance | 接受函 |
| h. Letters of Complaint | 投诉函 |
| j. Company Profiles | 公司简介 |
| k. Bills of Exchange | 汇票 |
| l. Letters of Credit | 信用证 |
| m. Menus | 菜谱 |
| n. Sightseeing | 旅游 |

(Cao 3)

Translation of Business Texts

Business texts aim at making certain facts clear and information passed through. (Nord, 1997:37). Guided by this Skopos, in most cases, this form of texts adopts domestication as its common translation method. We find that the main purpose of foreignization is to retain the foreign flavor of the text, so this purpose may not be important at all in business translation. In most cases, business texts have their fixed forms, and the transference of business message is required to be done in a very set period of time (otherwise it may become outdated). Translators are not criticized for the beauty of the language they use, but may run into trouble at a single mistake occurring in meaning, which might result in great loss. Therefore, in business English

translation, domestication prevails over foreignization although there are cases, when for the preciseness of language, the translator may adopt foreignization to copy the form of the source text sentence, or for better accuracy, coining a new word.

We find that business text is relatively formal, standard and polite. Most business texts have settled formats. And the entire text is well compact and possesses good cohesion and coherence. Business translators can do their jobs efficiently only by bearing these specific features of the business texts into their minds. (Wang Zheng 394-6)

Standards for Business English Translation

In the process of translation, translators should follow certain standards and principles. "Faithfulness" and "Smoothness" are the two most basic requirements. In practical work, only by combining "faithfulness" and "Smoothness" well in the translation, can we guarantee our basic requirements for the quality of the translation. In addition to "faithfulness" and "smoothness", the language style of the target language should be consistent with the source language during the translation, and the rhetoric of the source language should be reflected as much as possible. Faithfulness and smoothness, as the standard of translation, should be a unified whole, and the two cannot be separated.

Business English translation is different from literary translation. Business English is specialized English with a wide coverage, involving many different fields and different styles. The translation standards have their particularities and are difficult to unify. Neither Mr. Yan Fu's "Xin, Da, Ya" or Peter Newmark's communicative translation methods cannot be fully applied, but they can be used for reference. Many translators and scholars engaged in business English translation have put forward their views on this. Experts have different opinions, as Wang Yongtai (2002) said: "It is not advisable to seek comprehensive and unified translation standards, and it should depend on different styles. If it is measured by " Xinda Ya ", it should be focused differently "Liu Fagong believes that the practical business English translation standards should be" faithfulness, exactness, and consistency ". We believe that the translation principles of "faithfulness, exactness, and consistency " and "smoothness" are undoubtedly applicable in business English translation.

Faithfulness:

The "faithfulness" standard is the primary standard that business English translators must follow. The so-called "faithfulness" means that the information conveyed in the translated text must be consistent with the information conveyed in the original text, or the information must be equivalent. What is "faithful" should be the content intention and style effect of the original text, not the language expression form of the original text.

Accuracy

The "accuracy" standard is at the core of business English translation. "Accuracy" is the key; Translators must correctly understand and select words in the process of information conversion. Conceptual expressions must be accurate, items and names must be correct. Quantity and units must be accurate. The original language information should be completely expressed in the target language. Do not misinterpret the original meaning.

Consistency

The so-called "Consistency" means that the translated names, concepts, terms, etc. used in the business English translation process should be kept consistent at all times, and the translation of the same concept or term is not allowed to be at will. (Liu Fagong, 1999) He has also said, the use of words is standardized, which conforms to the conventional meaning, and the translation to be in accordance with the language norms of business documents. The "Consistency" standard is conducive to the uniformity and standardization of business English translations.

Smoothness:

After translating one language into another, the translation should be smooth, clear and understandable. When translating between English and Chinese, the translation must be standardized, that is, the vocabulary, phrases, sentences, and grammar used must conform to the general standards and habits of the language and industry, and the words must be accurate, and the words must not be obscure, rigid, or foreign. (Duan Yunli 12)

As the international trade develops rapidly, the standardized translation of business English terminology becomes increasingly prominent...the translation of business English terminology should both follow the accepted conventions, and observe a set of practical translation strategies for the convenience of translating new terms. (Liu Yi, Chen Fang)

MIN SHEN, LIANG-QIU LV talking about accuracy in business translation advocates

China's globally-oriented economy demands that it should absorb more western business expertise which is mainly introduced in English. Business English, a branch of English for specific purpose (ESP), has a high requirement for accuracy of these translated materials because even the slightest negligence of the original may lead to failures of business transaction or even heavy financial losses. An accurate vocabulary translation is the foundation. It concludes solutions for translators including accumulation and accurate translation of terminologies, consistency of terminologies and comparison of dictionaries and understanding of different tax regimes. Business vocabularies are specific, professional and pertinent to terminologies of accounting, finance and trade. These features also apply to tax vocabularies. (MIN SHEN, LIANG-QIU LV)

The application of the "Alternative" Principle in Business English Translation

Due to the wide range of business English and the variety of styles, it is difficult to use a uniform translation standard. Individual translation can only be sought on the basis of the "equivalent" and "adaptable" principles guidelines. Therefore, to propose different specific translation standards for different business styles— "flexibility" is the most suitable for business translation. According to Gu Zhengkun, "the translation standards that are of practical value are those specific standards" (Gu Zhengkun 1998: 203). In the following, the author will use four common business styles: business English letters, business English advertisements, trademarks, and contracts to discuss its specific translation standards.

With the enlightenment of Economics of Language, optimizing business English practical teaching can increase the employment competitiveness of business English talents as well as the economic value of Business English teaching. Business English education combines the cultivation of English language ability and business practice competence. A business English practical teaching system should be established through integrated practical teaching, business internship, comprehensive foreign trade practice and enterprise practice. In this way, the

economic value of business English and the economic benefit of business English education will be maximized.(Zhao C & Zhao Y)

Loyalty principle of Skopos theory

With the frequent business communications between China and other countries, business translation has become increasingly important. Based on the experience in business translation, the author summarizes the characteristics of business text and finds that loyalty principle of Skopos theory has a meaningful implication in Chinese-English business translation. With an in-depth analysis of the principle of faithfulness in the application of Chinese-English business translation, the author aims to promote the quality of business translation and contributes to smooth conduct of trade activities. (Fu Qi-mian)

Christiane Nord talking about the loyalty writes:

Translators are experts in communication, and they are held responsible if communication does not work properly. This responsibility is what I call “loyalty.” In their role as mediators between members of two cultures, they should be loyal towards all their partners in the intercultural interaction. Loyalty is an interpersonal relationship built on mutual trust, a guiding principle between partners who have to rely on each other’s competence, fairness and good will. (Christiane Nord)

Miscellaneous issue in Business translation

Use of Metaphor

According to conceptual metaphor theory, metaphor is not only a figure of speech but in its nature a way of thinking. It is well-recognized that metaphors are pervasive in business English news. The author points out that there are three situations between English and Chinese metaphors translation: reproducing the same image in the TL (cultural overlaps in metaphor), replacing the image in the SL with a standard TL image (cultural diversity in metaphor) and converting metaphor to sense (cultural vacancy in metaphor) (Zhu min).

Current status of business translation

China is closely linked with the rest of the world in trade through Chinese-English business translation, the demand for which keeps growing as China strives to expand its international exchange and cooperation. However, for various reasons, the translation work done has hitherto been far from satisfactory. It is hereby proposed that dynamic cultural equivalence be applied as the overriding principle to guide and thus improve the C-E business translation. (FAN Si-yong)

With the development of globalization and frequent trade in the world, business English is becoming more and more important, and business English translation has become a necessary part of international business activities. Business English translation, a typical cross-cultural communicative activity, is bound to be closely related to culture. (Liu Hai-yan)

Business contract Translation

Discussing business contract English ZHANG Jing-cheng SHUAI Rong emphasis

As an ESP, business contract English is different from the general English and has its own special stylistic features. Further study on the stylistic features of business contract English and the particularity of stylistic features of business contract English will help translators to accurately understand and grasp business contract English’s original information during translating business contract English, and thus we can follow the certain translation principles, and adopt appropriate

translation strategies to push cross-culture business activities to develop effectively and deeply.
(ZHANG Jing-cheng SHUAI Rong)

Cultural issues in Translation

The cultural differences between China and the West greatly influence all aspects, especially in the translation of business English advertisements. The differences in language semantics, cultural values, aesthetic and customs and habits have direct impacts on the translation of Chinese and English advertising and the opportunities for product development. On the basis of understanding these differences, translators' understanding of business English advertisements will be more profound, and the translation will be more flexible, which will greatly help for the future cultural and business communication and integration. (Lú dōng méi, and wēng jué chēn.)

Competent business translator/interpreter

A competent business translator/interpreter must be skillful in inter-lingual conversion, sufficiently motivated by a sense of the translator's subjectivity, and thoroughly familiar with the business world by possessing an encyclopedic knowledge about a wide range of relevant subjects. (Aiping, M. O)

In this respect, collocation can be defined as a prefabricated, structurally coherent and semantically complete lexical combination consisting of two words, which is more frequent than by chance and can also show statistical significance (Feng, 2014).

Conclusion:

In the final analysis we can say that the Translation of Business texts is playing a crucial role at the international level in establishing smooth business relations among nations. Business texts as a form of informative texts are characterized by conciseness, accuracy, objectiveness, practicality, briefness, and courtesy. Translators are rarely criticized for the beauty of their language, but they may face problems at a single mistake occurring in meaning, resulting in a heavy loss. In most cases, business texts have their fixed forms, and the transference of business information must be done in a very short period of time. Business and technical translation account for the biggest proportion of translation work currently being commissioned by the industry, far exceeding the translation of literary texts in terms of both volume and financial worth. Existing principles of translation are rarely applicable to Chinese-English business translation. Translation principles of "faithfulness, exactness, and consistency" and "smoothness" are undoubtedly applicable in business English translation. Loyalty principle of Skopos theory has a meaningful implication in Chinese-English business translation. In business translation, domestication prevails over foreignization.

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