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Strategies of consecutive interpretation in joint press conferences

This article deals with problems of interpretation of political discourse in joint press conference. Novelty of research is identified by the lack of domestic publications in the field of Translation studies on press conferences in the context of Kazakhstan's foreign policy. Article examines characteristic features of consecutive interpretation of political media discourse. The need of effective strategies that help to provide adequate interpretation is identified and justified. On the basis of the study the authors suggest that background knowledge on communicative situation enables interpreter to solve tasks caused by time deficiency and different semantic structures. It is proved that use of compression, decompression and re-ordering string in consecutive interpretation is key to reach communicative equivalence in target text. Results show that juxtaposition of strategies in one discursive segment illustrates that inherent cognitive feature of interpretation process. Article consists of literature review, methods of research, description and analyses of research material.

Keywords: political communication, joint press conference, consecutive interpretation, strategies, compression, decompression, re-ordering string, source text (ST), target text (TT).

Introduction

At the time of political tensions between states effective political communication is only way of solving issues and providing peace and security in the world. Today media is not only a medium of political communication but its equal participant and “the main environment of its existence” [1; 31]. Press conference is a platform which enables media to perform democratic functions by asking questions, demanding explanations, commenting on certain political stance, criticizing politicians who sometimes cannot “think on their feet” and deal effectively with unexpected and difficult questions [2; 15]. Political interviews and press conferences belong to the same genre of media discourse. Distinctive feature of the latter includes participation of large number of journalists from different news agencies. Each journalist has opportunity to ask one question or to combine several questions in one. While in political interview, there is only one journalist who poses questions to the interviewee. Therefore, format of joint press conference allows politicians “to share the burden” of taking too much responsibility. Two-party or joint press conferences are connected to international political events. If the government experiences difficult foreign policy situation or is involved in controversial geo-political tension and has a strong willing to gain multilateral support, then it may hold numerous joint press conferences to reinforce its position or make particular statements [3; 17].

Joint press conferences followed by official visit of high-profile authority usually attracts foreign media which is aimed at providing objective and fair news. Therefore, statements of speakers and questions of journalists are often supported by simultaneous or/and consecutive interpretation. Since this unique setting of media performance is prone to conflict and unexpected course of events interpreting press conferences can be a daunting challenge. Nevertheless, first precondition for successful political communication is adequate interpretation of participants' speech.

Questions of interpretation adequacy in political encounters notably in joint press conferences still need scholarly attention. In their recent publications about governmental press conferences in China, T. Sun and H. Lui consider interpreters mediation in the process. Research is based on sociologist, E. Goffman's theory of face and footing in participation framework. C. Wodenjo conducted fundamental research on community interpretation as well as interpreter's footing in political encounters. M. Baker considers translation of political interview as a political action. In a number of publications, she examines activist's vis a vis professional's interpretation of political events. Issues of contextualization in political press conferences and the importance of background knowledge of the interpreter in political encounters are examined by author.

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Ch. Shaffner considers features of media and diplomatic interpretation of governmental press conferences and identifies translation strategies.

Lack of contemporary studies in interpretation of media political discourse in the frame of joint press conferences identifies the relevance of the study. Object of research is consecutive interpretation of briefing in joint press conference. Interpretation strategies of political media discourse serve as a subject of the study. One of the professional competences that interpreter should acquire is strategies or ability to process the information. The notion of “strategy” is widely used in theory of translation, however its cognitive and linguistic task in interpretation process is complicated due to its ambiguity. In one hand it is connected with different identification of the same strategy by different scholars, on other hand the questions of the character of the notion are still unclear. R. Setton identifies several problems of the identification of “strategy” in simultaneous interpretation. First, the questions of the cognitive characteristics: whether it is automatic behavior or learnable process. Second, quality and quantity of strategies and their functions are in discourse [4; 128]. The purpose of the study is to evaluate effectiveness of interpretation strategies in providing adequate interpretation. In order to achieve the purpose, study objectives focus on description of challenges of consecutive interpretation, interpretation strategies, identification of communicative situation and translation analyses of spoken discourse. Article consists of description of the methods and material of the study, results and their justification through discussion of translation analyses, brief description of concluded ideas.

Materials and methods

According to A. Shveitser, adequacy and equivalence in translation both have evaluative character which is connected to final result of translation and to the conditions of interlingual communicative action such as the choice of translation strategies for certain communicative situation [5; 95]. The key element of communicative equivalence is preserving communicative effect of original text in target text. Communicative effect per se is a result of communicative action respective to its purpose. In accordance to this purpose the addressee of communicative action creates certain message that corresponds to certain functional parameters and produces particular communicative effect on the receiver. Successful delivery of the communicative effect to the target language or in other words, adequate interpretation directly depends on application of interpretation strategies.

Strategy in interpretation is a method of accomplishing translation tasks which are aimed at adequate delivering of communicative intention of the sender from SL to TL taking into consideration cultural and personal features of the speaker, level of linguistic competence, meta and sub-categories of used languages. As we can see the notion of strategy is closely connected both to linguistic and extra-linguistic factors that identifies particular method for interpretation task. Some scholars state that usage of interpretation strategies directly depends on the language pairs. It relates to subject-object-verb and subject-verb-object combination of the languages. Different views on application of strategies belong to the group of scientists which claims that application of translation methods is universal for any language pairs.

In his research devoted to strategies in simultaneous interpretation, V. Iliukhin makes differentiations of strategies according to the factor of time and static factors [6; 101]. Both categories of strategies can be applied to consecutive interpretation mode. Unlike in simultaneous interpretation, listening, analysing and production efforts in consecutive mode activate different set of cognitive mechanisms. Long term memory and note taking skills of the interpreter facilitate the process of analysing long segments of SL speech and producing well-structured TL speech. Although research material considers short consecutive without note taking, it should be noted that speech transcripts have been provided to the interpreter beforehand as directed by the protocol.

The bulk of the study is based on evaluation of the effectiveness of strategies in consecutive interpretation in providing adequacy of the message in target language. Results of the study show that strategies of decompression, compression and strategy of re-ordering string are used in consecutive interpretation of spoken statement.

Consecutive interpretation of briefing statement delivered by D. Trump at joint press conference with N.A. Nazarbayev during his official visit to the USA in 2018 serves as research material. Content analysis of the source text is used to identify linguistic patterns of political media discourse in joint press conference. Comparative analysis of source and target is used to evaluate adequacy of interpretation. Translation analysis for transcribed version of interpretation is used to identify interpretation strategies.

Results and Discussion

The first President of the Republic of Kazakhstan paid his seventh official visit to the USA on January 16, 2018. It was the first official visit of N. Nazarbayev at the invitation of D. Trump since the latter had held the office and considered to be the second meeting of two leaders. Official visit of Kazakhstani leader was timely opportunity to demonstrate geo-political interest of America to Central Asia and intentions of both countries for further strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation. After closed-door session, two leaders held joint press conference and shared brief statement about the scope of the discussion. Nuclear non-proliferation, economic cooperation, shared commitments on Afghanistan were key points of the meeting. According to the protocol and structure of joint press conference, leader of the host country makes statement first, then the floor will be given to visiting party. Questions and answers session with journalists supported by linguistic interpretation comes after statements. Official interpreters of respective sides provide interpretation mode of which usually is defined either by the format of the meeting or organizers of the event. According to R. Setton, consecutive interpretation is the standard medium of debate at the League of Nations, the UN's ancestor, and continues to be widely used at small, bilingual meetings and ceremonial occasions [4; 18].

One of the distinctive types of media discourse, press conference, covers broad range of domains such as politics, sports, business, law and others. Communicative situation in political joint press conference is different from the one in Presidential press conference organized in the USA. Due to the busy agenda, joint press conference is time constraint. Taking into account the fact that consecutive interpretation is time-consuming, speakers' speeches are strictly regulated.

The other challenge for interpreter is based on memory effort. Opposite to simultaneous mode, consecutive interpretation requires a long-term memory which allows to memorize speech segments that last for several minutes. In the booth of simultaneous interpretation time has different dimension. The same goes for interpreter who works in consecutive mode without taking notes. Standing or sitting right next to the speaker in front of the audience requires interpreter to act as full-fledged participant of communication. Cognitive load and external factors affect the process of production and can be challenging not only for novice interpreters but also for trained professionals.

Translation analyses of speech segments show that due to the factors described above, memory and production efforts make interpreter to use strategy of re-ordering/recasting strings in other words to change the structure of source sentence in order to ease the output in target language. In this case emphasis is made to the sentence with more semantic charge. This strategy gives opportunity to reach equivalence close to the original.

Example 1

ST: Thank you. And I'm pleased to welcome President Nazarbayev who had done a tremendous job in Kazakhstan. And having you at the White House is an honor. Mr. President, thank you for visiting us, and we have very important discussions going on [7].

Literally: Спасибо. И я рад приветствовать Президента Назарбаева, проделавшего огромную работу в Казахстане. И принимать вас в Белом Доме — большая честь. Господин Президент, спасибо, что посетили нас, и у нас проходят очень важные обсуждения.

TT: Господин Президент, мы очень рады вас принимать в Белом Доме. То, что вы делаете в Казахстане — это замечательно, и спасибо за то, что Вы нас сегодня посетили для проведения важного диалога по важным вопросам, касающимся взаимоотношений между нашими странами [8].

Interpreter first gives the sentence with more semantic charge. Interpretation begins with addressing the President directly and verbs are given in active voice. Partitioning of the first sentence of SL allows to ease the comprehension of the information through formulating short sentences in TL.

Example 2

ST: And we're honored, and we are truly honored to be the first country to recognize Kazakhstani independence on Christmas Day 1991 [7].

Literally: И для нас большая честь, и действительно большая честь быть первой страной, признавшей Независимость Казахстана в день Рождества 1991 года.

TT: Для нас действительно очень, очень большая честь быть первой страной, которая признала Независимость Казахстана. Это было в день Рождества 1991 года [8].

Example 3

ST: Together, we dismantled Kazakhstan's nuclear weapons infrastructure and ensured a safer and healthier future for the children of Kazakhstan and for the world at large [7].

Literally: Вместе мы демонтировали казахстанскую ядерно-оружейную инфраструктуру и обеспечили более безопасное и здоровое будущее для детей Казахстана и всего мира.

ST: И вместе мы занялись тем, что мы демонтировали ядерное вооружение и его структуру в Казахстане. И также мы обеспечили более безопасное и более здоровое будущее для детей Казахстана и для всего мира [8].

Comprehension of sentence which begins with subject is easy. Partitioning of the complex sentence into two simple sentences with two subjects discharge the meaning of the interpreted segment. Strategy of re-ordering string is effective with SL texts overloaded with dependent clauses. Overloading causes difficulty in reconstructing logical chain in target text [6; 98].

In Example 1 TT ends with addition of “по важным вопросам касающимися взаимоотношения между нашими странами”. *Discussion* in ST is described as very important without specification. Interpreter added attribute to the SL sentence in order to specify that “important discussions” are about “cooperation between two states”. Example shows that interpreter used the strategy of decompression through compensation of information.

Example 4

ST: We've pursued opportunities to increase investment in Kazakhstan and the energy sector in particular.

Literally: Мы преследовали возможности для увеличения инвестиций в Казахстан и, в частности, в энергетический сектор [7].

TT: Мы преследовали возможности, стремились к целям, связанным с тем, чтобы увеличить инвестиции в Казахстане, в частности, в энергетический секторе [8].

Example 5

ST: American businesses are currently among the largest investors in Kazakhstan. And tonight, the President will attend a roundtable with American business executives at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to further advance our commercial ties [7].

Literally: Американский бизнес в настоящее время является одним из крупнейших инвесторов в Казахстане. А сегодня вечером президент примет участие в круглом столе с руководителями американских предприятий в Торговой палате США, чтобы еще больше укрепить наши коммерческие связи.

TT: *Предприятия Соединенных Штатов*, американский бизнес, они сейчас являются одними из наиболее крупных инвесторов в Казахстане и сегодня господин Президент будет посещать круглый стол с представителями американского бизнеса в торговой палате США для того, чтобы наши коммерческие связи, *коммерческие контакты* и в дальнейшем улучшались [8].

Usually, unavailability of the concept in SL or unawareness of the sentence structure used by the speaker prompt interpreter to anticipate the forthcoming information, sometimes using generalization or words with closer meaning. In its turn, this kind of manipulation causes omission of information which can be compensated by interpreter later on. In Example 4 interpreter compensated literary translation of “to pursue opportunities” with addition of its adapted translation. R. Setton states that “pragmatic mediation and compensation are the necessary corollary for a faithful rendition when semantic structure is upset, as it is necessarily in translation due to form-meaning asymmetries between language generally” [4; 219]. Russian and English languages have different level of explicitation that allows interpreter to use compression and decompression. Example 5 illustrates addition through specification in order to make the segment understandable to receivers. “Американский бизнес” to specify earlier pronounced “предприятия Соединенных Штатов”, “коммерческие контакты” to expand the meaning of “коммерческие связи”. By using compression, interpreter expands translated phrase, i.e. uses the strategy of decompression.

Different types of strategies can be used in one segment of speech. In following example interpreter uses decompression along with its reversed form, compression. Speakers tend to comment their written texts by expressing their opinion in spoken form or deliver speech without in-advance preparation. This usually takes place during briefing, press conferences, interviews or debates. [9; 61] In theory of translation compression is used to form concise version of ST. In situational model this notion is known as “linguistic summarization” [5; 95].

Example 6

ST: Kazakhstan is a valued partner in our efforts to rid the Korean Peninsula of nuclear weapons [7].

Literally: Казахстан является ценным партнером в наших усилиях по избавлению Корейского полуострова от ядерного оружия.

ТТ: Казахстан является чрезвычайно ценным партнером в наших усилиях, направленных на то, чтобы имело место денуклиаризации Корейского полуострова, чтобы там не было ядерного оружия [8].

Instead of explicit phrase “избавление от ядерного оружия” interpreter uses “денуклиаризация”. Phrase “денуклиаризация” is transliterated form of English word “denuclearization”. Phrase has been widely used in the context of nuclear disarmament of Korean peninsula during D. Trump’s presidency. According to the categorization by V. Iliukhin, strategy of compression in interpretation is divided into syllabic, syntactical, lexical and semantical [6; 92]. Interpreter is free to use all types of compression in one segment if applicable. Example 6 illustrates lexical compression, expression the same idea with fewer or single word. Describing compression in the frame of political discourse, A. Islam states that omission of sentence which carries additional information does not affect the meaning of the speech even at informational level [9; 77]. At the same time, we can notice compensation through explication at the end of the sentence “чтобы там не было ядерного оружия”.

Example 7

ST: That’s a long time ago, but not that long. *You’ve made incredible strides*. Since that time, the United States and Kazakhstan have worked together to advance peace and security in the region and far beyond the region [7].

Literally: Это было давно, но не так давно. Вы добились невероятных успехов. С тех пор Соединенные Штаты и Казахстан вместе работают над укреплением мира и безопасности в регионе и далеко за его пределами [8].

ТТ: Это произошло довольно давно, но ни так уж и давно на самом то деле и с тех пор Соединенные Штаты и Казахстан они вместе работали для того, чтобы содействовать миру и безопасности в регионе и за его пределами.

Example 7 shows that interpreter omitted the sentence “вы добились невероятных успехов” without compensation. The idea of the segment is prolonged partnership in providing peace and security in Central Asia and beyond. Diplomatic relations between two states were established since Kazakhstan gained its independence. Original speech states that since then Kazakhstan achieved incredible results but it is not mentioned in interpretation. Compensation is effective in case of speech redundancy, repetition of phrases with the same semantic meaning. In this example, interpreter constructed the target text based on the theme of the segment.

Interpreter’s mediation in communicative situation depends on the medium of communicative event. As it is mentioned above, political press conference is a hybrid communicative setting. It is emerged on the boundaries of media and political discourse. Therefore, interpretation of political media discourse can be considered from the perspective of diplomatic and media interpretation. Diplomatic interpretation is mostly speaker oriented and performed by highly trained in-house specialist from respective governmental bodies [10; 48]. Media interpreters work to media companies and usually provide receiver-oriented interpretation. Consecutive interpretation of D. Trump’s speech is provided by interpreter from the administration office and he was invited to many other encounters between representatives of the Ak Orda and the White House.

Level of mediation in diplomatic interpretation is relatively low. It can be explained by interpreter’s intention to avoid misunderstandings of any kind. However, adherence to the institution which she/he represents, sense of commitment might be signaled by linguistic devices such as addition of intensifiers or repetitions. Next example shows interpreter’s involvement in the interaction.

Example 8

ST: I look forward to seeing the great advances of the Kazakhstani people under your *incredible* leadership. And that’s what it is, it’s incredible leadership. We want a strong, sovereign, and thriving future for Kazakhstan and for the peace-loving nations of the world — all of them. Thank you very much. I very much appreciate it [6].

Literary: Я с нетерпением жду больших достижений казахстанского народа под вашим невероятным руководством. И вот что это такое, это невероятное лидерство. Мы хотим сильного, суверенного и процветающего будущего для Казахстана и для всех миролюбивых народов мира. Большое спасибо. Я очень ценю это.

ТТ: И я с нетерпением ожидаю возможностей увидеть тот огромный прогресс, который был достигнут народом Казахстана под *замечательным, великолепным, отличным* руководством. Мы хотим,

чтобы у Казахстана было хорошее, суверенное и процветающее будущее и то же самое мы желаем всем миролюбивым народам мира. Абсолютно всем. Большое спасибо [7].

Intensification of the word “incredible” and addition of more adjectives in Russian rendition compensate the omission of the next sentence in ST. The repeated use of synonymic adjectives is rhetorically important as it shows significance of the guest speaker and shows intention of the host speaker to praise and express appreciation to his counterpart. Use of linguistic device shows interpreter’s alignment to particular institution.

Conclusions

Features of communication in frame of special political setting justify the important role of interpretation process in establishing, maintaining and enhancing ties between states and cutting distance between public and government. Background knowledge about communicative situation and trained skill of using set of strategies used in consecutive interpretation are crucial in delivering adequate interpretation of political media discourse in joint press conferences. Results of the study show that strategy of re-ordering string is effective in interpretation between languages with different semantic structures. Strategies vary due to language combination. Level of specification of particular language and interpreter’s constant compensation activate decompression of target text. Compression solves translation problems challenges by time shortage and speech redundancy. Results demonstrate that despite of interpreter’s attempt to remain impartial and invisible during political interactions, distinctive mediation might happen from time to time. Study implicates that research on strategies of consecutive interpretation would be more accurate if more studies about interpretation of political encounters were considered in frame of joint press conferences. Joint political press conference is a platform which allows politicians to act on behalf of their respective countries, showcase their positions toward counterparty, present commitments to particular idea and shape public’s perception.

Previous researches of this topic do not cover features joint press conferences as specific genre of political discourse. Results of the study can be used in Theory and Practice of Interpretation, Media Studies and International Relations.

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Бірлескен баспасөз конференциясын ізбе-із аудару барысында қолданылатын стратегиялар

Мақалада бірлескен баспасөз конференциясындағы саяси дискурсты аудару мәселелері қарастырылған. Зерттеудің жаңалығы Қазақстанның сыртқы саясаты контекстінде бірлескен баспасөз конференцияларының ауызша аудармасын қарастыратын аударматану саласындағы отандық басылымдардың жоқтығымен айқындалады. Саяси медиа дискурстың ізбе-із аудармасының ерекшеліктері талданған. Барабар аударманы қамтамасыз етуге мүмкіндік беретін тиімді стратегияларды анықтау қажеттілігі айқындалған және негізделген. Зерттеу негізінде авторлар аудармашының коммуникативтік жағдаят бойынша аялық білімі, бастапқы және аударма тілдердің әртүрлі семантикалық құрылымдарынан және уақыт тапшылығынан туындайтын аударма мәселелерін шешуге көмектеседі деп тұжырымдайды. Ізбе-із аудармада ықшамдалу, декомпрессия және құрылымның ретін қайта құру стратегияларын қолдану аударма тілінде коммуникативті баламалыққа жетуге мүмкіндік беретіні дәлелденді. Алынған нәтижелер бір дискурсивті сегментте бірнеше стратегияларды қатар қолдану ауызша аударманың когнитивті үдерісін айқындайтынын көрсетеді. Мақала зерттеу бойынша әдебиеттерге шолудан, зерттеу әдістерінен, зерттеу материалының сипаттамасынан, саяси дискурсты ағылшын тілінен орыс тіліне аудару талдауларынан тұрады.

Клт сөздер: саяси коммуникация, біріккен баспасөз конференциясы, ізбе-із аударма, стратегиялар, ықшамдалу, декомпрессия, құрылымды қайта құру, бастапқы мәтін (БМ), аударма мәтін (АМ).

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Стратегии последовательного перевода на совместных пресс-конференциях

В статье рассмотрены проблемы перевода политического дискурса на совместных пресс-конференциях. Новизна исследования определена отсутствием отечественных публикаций в области переводоведения, посвященных переводу совместных пресс-конференций в контексте казахстанской внешней политики. Проанализированы особенности последовательного перевода политического медийного дискурса. Выявлена и обоснована необходимость определения эффективных стратегий, обеспечивающих адекватный перевод. На основе исследования авторы предполагают, что фоновые знания переводчика о коммуникативной ситуации помогают решить проблемы перевода, вызванные разницей семантических структур исходного языка и языка перевода, а также дефицитом времени. Доказано, что использование стратегий компресии, декомпресии и стратегий линейности в последовательном переводе дает возможность достичь коммуникативной эквивалентности на языке перевода. Результаты показывают, что параллельное использование нескольких стратегий одновременно в сегменте дискурса определяет когнитивный процесс перевода. Статья состоит из обзора литературы, методов исследования, описания исследовательского материала, анализа перевода политического дискурса с английского на русский язык.

Ключевые слова: политическая коммуникация, совместная пресс-конференция, последовательный перевод, стратегии, компрессия, декомпрессия, стратегия линейности, исходный текст, текст перевода.

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