

# A Case Study on Explanatory Interpretation Strategy from the Perspective of Functionalist Skopos Theory—Taking China-Aid Project as an Example

Dan Jiao<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Foreign Languages College, Henan University of Technology, Zhengzhou, China

\* Dan Jiao, E-mail: danjiao@gmail.com

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## **Abstract**

*This article is dedicated to the strategy of explanatory interpretation from the perspective of Functionalist Skopos Theory, which is one of the most important translation theories guiding translation action and teaching. Taking China-Aid Project as a case study, the research objects are hundreds of foreign trainees from the China-Aid Project and Chinese interpreters from 2008 to 2014, via the research approaches of literature review, quantity and quality research methods. In regarding to the research findings, the article straightens out the translation problems and proposes the explanatory interpretation strategy effectively used on diversified international communication occasions. In general, through statistical analysis and the empirical research from the three dimensions of Skopos Theory, explanatory interpretation method and China-Aid Project, this article aims at helping translators to accomplish a high quality translation product effectively with the explanatory interpretation strategy.*

## **Keywords**

*explanatory interpretation, Functionalist Skopos Theory, China-Aid Project*

## 1. Introduction

Translation builds up international communicative bridges among diversified languages and cultures, which fulfills the translation's ultimate function. Translators and scholars in the translation field have summarized many useful translation methods through a great deal of translation practice since the emerge of translation action.

In this article, through my practical experience and empirical study based on the China Foreign-Aid Human Resources Development and Cooperation Training Project (hereinafter called China-Aid Project), I intend to propose a much more effective method, namely explanatory interpretation, and demonstrate how the explanatory interpretation method is used effectively in the translation process especially on international communications and how to improve the method strategically for better accomplishment of translation's function.

As the executive manager and interpreter of the China-Aid Project in Henan province appointed by Chinese government, I found a couple of interpretation problems in the project focusing on three points as follows. First, most interpreters improve their interpretation quality merely through consistent personal practice and experience, which lacks a strong theoretical foundation and supports. Second, the interpretation quality directly influences the effectiveness of China's international communication. To put an end to the phenomena of dead interpretation, word-by-word interpretation, rigid and mechanical interpretation, etc., an effective interpretation method under various complicated circumstances is supposed to be explored, in order to effectively improve interpretation quality and effectiveness. Third, most of the present interpreters are not aware of, and not capable of applying the explanatory interpretation strategy into their interpretation. Because the goal of China-Aid Project is to strengthen the friendly relationship between China and other developing countries, and to project a positive international image, the worse interpretation quality might cause worse international influence. Considering the above problems, connecting with the practicing experience, I have been reflecting on the key reason of the failed communication, which very likely lies in the incorrect interpretation methods. I noticed that the explanatory interpretation method might be a much more effective solution for the improvement of interpretation quality. Therefore, the following questions are to be solved step by step theoretically: What is the connotation of explanatory interpretation? Why and how do interpreters use explanatory method for interpretation correctly?

From the perspective of functionalist Skopos theory, the remainder of this article introduces the research background, research process, research findings and discussions. In the conclusion section, taking the China-Aid Project as an example, I propose the idea that explanatory interpretation is an effective strategy for translators and how to use it properly.

## 2. Research Process

### 2.1 Research Background

In this section, the research background of this article is to be introduced. Under the current global situation, international communication and cooperation is urgently needed for China's development in economy, education, culture, scientific technology, etc., in which, interpretation, therefore, plays an unprecedented role in international communications for substantial improvement and development. Under this context, the China-Aid Project has become a great benchmark for enhancing international cooperation and testifying the crucial role of interpretation. Below I will straighten out the significance of China-Aid Project as a case study supporting with some related statistics.

Since the foundation of the China-Aid Project in the 1950s, remarkable achievements have been accomplished wherein translation shed lights on the successful international communication between China and other countries. In this article, the China-Aid Project specifically refers to the Official Seminars and Technology Training Courses that are sponsored by the Chinese Commerce Department. To be detailed, the Official Seminars refers that the Chinese government invites the officials from recipient countries to participate in short-term projects in the various fields for about 10 to 20 days in the forms of lecture, seminar and visits, etc. Technology Training Courses mainly refers that the Chinese government invites the technicians and research faculty of other countries, especially other developing countries, to attend the technology training courses for one to three months in the forms of lecture, workshop, visiting, etc., in order to exchange the latest technology skills and academic resources among different nations.

The political function of the China-Aid Project is not only to help the world to know more about China, but also to promote the new strategic partnership between China and other countries for mutual equality and faithfulness in the fields of politics, economy, education and culture. Through the training forms, such as seminar, conference, visiting, etc., the training courses built up the bridge between China and the other countries. Tracing back to 1953, China first trained foreign interns which opened the curtain of China-Aid Project. At that very time when the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea ended, Chinese government agreed to arrange 2,500 Korean children refugees to study production technology in China on demand of Korea government.

Basically, the China-Aid Projects are categorized into 6 types of Officials Seminar, Technology Training Course, Foreign Students Project, "Going Global" Project, Foreign Aid Youth Volunteer Project and Short-Term Exchange Project. It is stated from China's Ministry of Commerce that, there are totally over 2,500 training courses held in China and 86,000 trainees from 150 developing countries have been trained in China till 2012. So far by now, the China-Aid Projects are involved in about 20 fields and over 150 majors, they are: politics, economy, diplomatic, political Parties communication, agriculture, education, science and technology, medicine, sanitation, energy, transportation, culture, administration management, audition, poverty alleviation, etc. (Note 1).

The substantial achievement and impact of the China-Aid Project provides authentic real-world

statistics to this research, especially from the aspects of the political significance of China's international communication and image projecting. Translation, as a bridge between various cultures, needs to seek strategies for diversified contexts, wherein the explanatory interpretation strategy serves functionally for successful translation.

## *2.2 Research Objects*

In order to investigate the status quo of the interpretation discipline and the effectiveness of explanatory interpretation, I have classified the research objects into two groups:

The first research objects group is 300 trainees, sampled from the recipient countries in 2008 to 2014 of "Seminar on Grain Security for Developing Countries", "Training Course on Grain Storage Technology for Developing Countries", "Seminar on Primary Teachers for African Countries", "Training Course on Chinese Shaolin Martial Arts for Developing Countries", etc. They are from countries such as Jamaica, Uganda, South Africa, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Sudan, Jordan, Pakistan, Palestine, Mongolia, Namibia, Mauritius, Mali, Liberia, Seychelles, Zambia, Zimbabwe, etc. located in Latin Americas, Europe and Pacific Oceans. The goal of questionnaire for this group is to collect the evaluation data on the interpretation accuracy and interpreters' effectiveness.

The second research objects group is 30 Chinese staff, from the China-Aid Project in 2008 to 2014, serving as the executive managers, professional interpreters, faculties of foreign languages college and the university student volunteers. This group's investigation results are expected to show the possibility and effectiveness of the interpretation method to support the explanatory interpretation strategy in translation process.

## *2.3 Research Approaches*

This article uses Germany Functionalist Skopos Theory as a theoretical framework, takes China-Aid Project as an example, and employs quantity and quality combination as research approaches. Through the statistical findings' analysis, the article argues the application skills of explanatory interpretation method in various contexts.

Regarding the research approaches, the quantity research statistics are basically collected from the investigation questionnaires on recipient trainees, interpreters (volunteers from English major and non-English major) to know about the interpretation effectiveness. The research analysis mainly focuses on four aspects: (1) The trainees' feedback on Chinese interpreters; the general evaluation and suggestions to China-Aid Project; the advice to interpreters (volunteers of English major and non-English major); (2) The interpreters' self-evaluation in the process of China-Aid Project; the practical suggestions on promoting the quality of China-Aid Project; the suggestions to interpreters and student volunteers; the advice on interpretation education and interpretation method study; (3) The general evaluation and suggested improvement on the duties of the project executive managers; the suggestions and advice on the project itself; the objective evaluation and advice to the overall interpretation practice; the suggestions on the improvement of the project executive managers' interpretation level; (4) The evaluation of volunteers from English major and non-English major's

interpretation effectiveness; the suggestions on self-improvement of interpretation in the process of China-Aid Project; the suggestions on the English interpretation major in higher education.

### 3. Research Findings and Discussion

Through the aforementioned quantitative and qualitative research approaches on the two objects groups, this section derives some findings, and presents a discussion from multiple aspects.

#### 3.1 The Evaluation on Interpretation Effectiveness and Interpreters' Quality in China-Aid Project

According to the questionnaire data, I have classified the data into several aspects. For example, Table 1 is the evaluation on interpretation effectiveness of the China-Aid Project from the investigation groups in Henan Province.

**Table 1. 2008-2014 the Evaluation on Interpretation Effectiveness of China-Aid Project**

Evaluation Content	5	4	3	2	1	Overall Evaluation
Complete System	100%					5.00
Lecture	91.0%	9.0%				4.91
English level of lecturer	80.3%	19.7%				4.80
Teaching materials	89.1%	10.9%				4.89
Interpretation Level of interpreters	92.4%	7.6%				4.92
Transportation Arrangement	95.3%	4.7%				4.95
Location of accommodations	92.6%	7.4%				4.92
Arrangement of meals	86.5%	13.5%				4.87
Condition of accommodation	88.9%	11.1%				4.89
Hospitality of Chinese staff	96.7%	3.3%				4.97
Foreign language communication						
Capacity of Chinese staff	86.8%	13.2%				4.87
Management Capacity of Chinese staff	87.2%	12.8%				4.87

*Note.* 5=very good/very suitable/very satisfied; 4=fairly good/fairly suitable/fairly satisfied; 3=good/suitable/satisfied; 2=generally good/ generally suitable/generally satisfied; 1=not good/not suitable/not satisfied.

Table 1 shows that, with the representative sample of Henan Province, from the year of 2008 to 2014, the satisfaction degree of the trainees to Chinese interpreters is up to 92.4%, which indicates that the overall evaluation from the trainees is very high. The rate of “very satisfied” of lecturer’s English competence and Chinese manager’s foreign language communication capacity is 80.3% and 86.8%, which is relatively lower than the other satisfaction rates. The degree of satisfaction to the lecturers is 80.3%, which shows that the student volunteers’ English competence is not good enough; the

satisfaction degree of trainees to managers and overall training results is between 85%-95%, which reflects the high satisfaction and affirmation from the organizers; The self-evaluation percentage of English major volunteers is between 50%-70%, which demonstrates that student interpreters can objectively recognize the gap and weakness of their personal English competence with higher self-awareness. Through the research statistics, one can conclude that the effectiveness of interpretation, and the interpreter's education specific to the China-Aid Project, should be strengthened continuously. In the process of the China-Aid Project, the interpreters' quality is playing crucial role and the interpretation quality directly influences the accomplishment of the China-Aid Project.

**Table 2. Assessment on the Interpreters' Quality in China-Aid Project**

	5	4	3	2	1	overall assessment
Capacity of Chinese managers'						
English competence	97.38%	2.62%				4.97
Capacity of Chinese managers'	96.11%	3.89%				4.96
organization						
Capacity of Chinese managers'	97.31%	2.69%				4.97
communication and collaboration						
Capacity of Chinese managers'	96.36%	3.64%				4.96
working effectiveness						

*Note.* The data in the form are collected from 108 investigation questionnaires; The amount of evaluation subject is balanced.

Based on the investigation feedback of trainees in 2013, Table 2 further shows that the satisfaction degree of trainees on the English level of managers, organization capacity and communication and collaboration capacity is 96.36%-97.38%, and the overall assessment is 4.96-4.97. It shows that the quality of Chinese managers has improved comprehensively. The result indicates that the China-Aid Project is beneficial for the cultivation of high-level managers and interpreters to server for better international communication and cooperation.

### *3.2 Investigation on Cultural Interpretation and Explanatory Interpretation Method*

In this section, I will introduce the cultural interpretation and explanatory interpretation method. Different countries have different cultures, which is the most challenging barrier for interpreters with different culture background. Explanatory interpretation method is, to some extent, a suitable solution for interpreters to meet the challenge. From the following data, we will further argue the importance and use of the interpretation method.

**Table 3. The Validity Assessment of Cultural Interpretation in China-Aid Project**

	5	4	3	2	1	overall assessment
Agriculture	83.3%	6.8%	6.3%	3.9%		4.6
Science culture	79.3%	11.1%	6.4%	3.2%		4.6
Chinese character culture	74.6%	19.9%	3.8%	1.7%		4.7
Education culture	51.5%	30.3%	11.6%	6.6%		4.3
Food culture	51.8%	30.9%	13.1%	4.2%		4.3
Martial arts culture	82.7%	6.4%	6.9%	4.0%		4.7
Folk custom culture	31.1%	44.7%	44.7%	9.5%		4.0

*Note.* 5=most effective; 1=ineffective or unknown fields.

Table 3 shows the validity assessment of cultural interpretation results, from the aspects of Chinese character culture, and martial arts culture in the process of the China-Aid Project, are relatively higher than the other fields by the value of 4.7, which, to some extent, reflects the positive role of the China-Aid Project to the international cultural communication. It also indicates that the international culture communication needs relatively more enhancement.

Moreover, there are many factors that influence the interpretation effectiveness in the process of the China-Aid Project, among which the interpretation method is one of the influential factors. Therefore, in what follows, I introduce the explanatory interpretation for preliminary investigation, which is the most popular and widely used method by the interpreters.

**Table 4. Evaluation on the Effectiveness of Explanatory Interpretation in China-Aid Project**

Subject \ Level				
	Very effective	Fairly effective	Average effective	Bad effective
Professional interpreters	95.0%	4.6%	0.4%	
Student volunteers	90.2%	2.5%	7.3%	
Foreign trainees	98.4%	1.6%		
Managers of Organizer	95.7%	4.3%		

*Note.* The data in the form are collected from 108 investigation questionnaires; The amount of evaluation subject is balanced.

Table 4 shows that the evaluation subjects, including professional interpreters, student volunteers, foreign trainees and managers of organizer; generally believe that the validity percentage of explanatory interpretation is above 93%, in which the demand on students' interpretation quality from foreign trainees is the highest. Therefore, the explanatory interpretation method can effectively help interpreters to improve the interpretation quality.

### 3.3 Specific Investigation on Interpretation Effectiveness—Taking the China-Aid Project as an Example

In 2011, the China-Aid Project of “Training Course on Chinese Shaolin Martial Arts for Developing Countries” opened in Henan province for the first time, lasting for 184 days. The trainees are mainly officials, coaches and athletes from Afghanistan, The Republic of Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Bulgaria, The Republic of Ecuador, The Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, The Republic of Serbia, Indonesia, etc. The training content widely covers Chinese national conditions, Henan provincial conditions, boxing, cudgel, spear, sword, sword and other weapons, equipment, and instrument pair exercise, equipment pair exercise routine, soft and hard Kung Fu training, Qigong, Taiji Quan, Taiji Sword, etc. The teaching mode is the combination of observation and emulation, field visits, informal discussion and seminars.

This action research approach is time-sharing and classified with the object of the translation staff in charge of Chinese Martial Arts Training Course. The translation staff are divided into the English major students of oral interpretation, the English major of non-oral interpretation, P.E. major students, non-P.E. major students, involving 60 students in total. The first step of the research is about the translation teaching conditions of the four groups of students, the purpose and the expectation value of the extracurricular practice in the Martial Arts Training Course; the second step of the research mainly involves the translation effectiveness assessment of student volunteers in the 184 training days.

Academically, the Action Research refers to the teacher’s teaching action and a research methodology of solution to the foreign languages teaching practice problems. The primary purpose of the action research lies in improving the foreign language teaching quality through actions and solving the problems of foreign language teaching in practice. In terms of Action Research, which is first proposed by the Germany social psychologist Lewin in 1940s, it generally refers to “research in action” or “acting while researching”. Action research is sometimes referred to as “teacher’s scientific research” or “scientific research in teaching action”.

**Table 5. Statistics of Student Interpreters in Chinese Martial Arts Training Course**

Numbers of the research objects	Major	English level	Whether to be trained translation professionally or not	The purpose and expectation value of participating the Martial Arts Training Course
20	English Interpreting	TEM 8 (Note 2)	Y	Translation course is the compulsory course. Expect to improve the level of English interpretation through the project of Martial Art Training Course.
20	Non-English Interpreting	TEM 4&8	Y	Expect to improve the level of English level through the social practice, the comprehensive capacity and know



15	P.E.	CET6/4 (Note 3)	N	more about Chinese and Western culture, although they might not take up the job of translation major. Expect to communicate the Chinese and Western Martial Arts culture and improve the communication ability of oral English through this opportunity provided by the China-Aid project. Expect to know more about Martial Arts culture and improve oral English by participating the social practice personally.
5	Others	CET6/4	N	

**Table 6. The Gradual Assessment Results of the Application of Explanatory Interpretation in Translation Practice**

Types of Volunteer	Duration Degree of Satisfaction	The 1 <sup>st</sup> month	The 2 <sup>nd</sup> month	The 3 <sup>rd</sup> month	The 4 <sup>th</sup> month	The 5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> month
English interpreting major		70%	70%	85%	91%	93%
Non-English interpreting major		69%	71%	87%	91%	92%
P.E. major		61%	65%	70%	78%	83%
Other majors		62%	64%	69%	77%	84%

*Note.* The statistics in the form above are collected from 48 investigation questionnaires in which the participants of questionnaires are the foreign trainees, Chinese teachers and executive managers.

The questionnaires on the student interpreters (action research objects) demonstrate that only the English major students are trained professionally with the translation courses, but the depth and breadth of training are generally believed inadequate. Whereas, the students have the strong desire and confidence to participate in the real translation social practice. Through the analysis of the action research statistics, among English interpreting majors, non-English interpreting majors, P.E. majors and other major students, the satisfaction degree to students' translation shows a growing trend month-by-month in the 6 months. Besides, although the degree of satisfaction in the first two months is generally not high, through the adjustment and training in a certain time by mastering the explanatory interpretation method and utilizing the techniques correctly, the translation effectiveness is improved gradually. On the other hand, the degree of satisfaction of English interpreting majors is higher than the other major students with the trend of normal distribution.

The conclusion from these investigation results is that joining the Chinese Shaolin Martial Arts Project has helped the students to improve their English interpretation level, to recognize personal weakness of translation ability and improve their learning efficiency. It is imperative for translation researchers and teachers to select an effective interpretation-teaching method to solve the problems in translation.

#### 4. Strategy of Explanatory Interpretation on Various Categorized Occasions

With the acceleration of the international communication between China and other countries, language researchers and international affairs practitioners have realized that a correct and effective interpretation method is needed urgently to reach the end goal in international communication. Through the practical experience and summary of the findings in section 3, one can see the essential importance to pursue and apply an effective interpretation method into the international communication of China. To this end, we have to make a clear classification of international communication interpretation according to its function. In the following subsections, I will discuss about four representative categories of interpretation. In each category, the indispensable function of explanatory interpretation will be discussed and analyzed.

##### 4.1 Reception Interpretation

Reception interpretation is also known as the liaison interpretation, which is a significant part of international communication and a very important political task that must be carried out without any hiccups. At the moment that interpreters receive the mission, they bear the responsibility of arranging everything well for the foreign guests with Chinese traditional courtesy as well as a sense of politics. In this process, the interpreter plays a decisive role. Usually, the first step of reception interpretation is picking up the foreign guests at the airport and escorting them to hotels. Qualified interpreters may seize each chance to communicate with the foreign guests and let them know more about China. For example, in accordance with my personal working experience in foreign affairs, when a team of international scholars comes to visit some universities in Henan, China, a brief introduction to Henan and the relevant information on universities should be conveyed to them on the way to the hotel. Even a high level impression of Henan can help the communication, especially if members of the team are first-time visitors. For example, interpreters may introduce Henan briefly at a proper time as follows:

*“Henan, an agricultural province, in the middle-lower Yellow River valley, derives its name from the greater part of the provinces lying south of the Yellow River. One of the earliest developed regions in the country, it was a political and cultural center in ancient China. Henan has an area of 167,000 sq. km and a population of 89.46 million. The provincial capital is Zhengzhou, a big industrial center straddling the intersection of the country’s two major trunk lines—the north-south Beijing-Guangzhou Railway and the east-west Venezuela Railway that links Lanzhou to Lianyungang Port in Northwest China (Retrieved from <http://www.henan.gov.cn/hngk/>)”.*

This part is a necessarily additional explanation to foreigners for further understanding from the

perspectives of location, transportation, resources and historical sites of Henan province.

The following steps of reception interpretation are usually related to the detailed agenda, introduction and meeting, negotiation or signature ceremony, banquets, visits and farewell. In accordance with the international affairs courtesy, gift exchange ceremony between host parties and foreign delegations is usually arranged at the beginning or at the end of the formal meeting. Both parties prefer to present gifts with traditional characteristics of their own countries, which can fully express their sincerity and warmth. For example, in Henan province, the typical representatives of Chinese traditional culture are Chinese Knot, porcelain, Millennium City drawing, embroidery, etc. But actually the inner significance and essential meaning of those traditional gifts cannot be understood thoroughly by foreigners unless they have lived in China for some time. In this case, indispensable explanations should be added by the interpreters. For example, interpreters may explain the Chinese Knot as follows. *“The emotion and wisdom in the Chinese Knot is a part of ancient culture of China. It’s full of people’s best wishes and happiness”*. All the interpretations should fully express not only the traditional meaning of the gifts but also the host’s warmth and sincerity to strengthen the friendliness.

In the whole process of reception interpretation, the interpreter is also a propagandist, a source of information, a coordinator, and a security guard. He or she should act very flexibly and add necessary explanations at any proper time. To some extent, whether the foreign guests feel satisfied or not determines a long-term exchange and cooperation with foreign parties in future.

#### 4.2 Foreign Affairs Conversation Interpretation

Conversation interpretation primarily refers to the interpretation on certain special topics that both parties are concerned about. The conversation contents widely include the special topics on politics, economy, education, culture, agriculture, industry, medicine, foreign trade, environmental protection, etc.

Interpreters should know the practical situation between the two parties and the intention of the bilateral communication. First of all, the interpreters need to make full preparations for the conversation, to be familiar with, among other things, the background of the conversation, the intention of both parties, the possibilities of further cooperation and exchange, the status of the participants of the conversation, and a number of special terminologies relevant to the conversation topic. During this process, additional explanations are certainly necessary to help the foreigners in further understanding of the conversation. Interpreters are the main facilitators in these conversations for smooth communication and better understanding for both parties.

For example, in conversation of the joint education program with foreign parties, the Chinese parties will make a brief introduction from the aspects of teaching program, teaching curriculum, goal of module, learning outputs, indicative content, reference book, etc. Due to the different educational systems, when the two parties are discussing the courses linking, some teaching courses with Chinese characteristics are unfamiliar to foreign parties. For example, the course of *“Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory and ‘Three Representatives’ Theory”* is a compulsive course

for university students in China. This not only reflects the political policy from the government of China but also reflects the educational system and cultural background of China's higher education. Interpreters need to add some explanations to foreigners about the unique characteristics in China's educational system for mutual understanding.

When having conversations about educational testing systems, standard terms such as "CET 4", "CET 6", "TEM 4", "TEM 8", are familiar to the Chinese, but not to foreigners. In these cases, interpreters should explain these abbreviations to the foreigners with the full names, such as "*College English Test Level Four (Six)*" and "*Test Level Four (Eight) for English Majors*". If it is necessary, the current educational background in China's higher education should also be interpreted to foreigners.

Another example, during the interpretation of professional scientific technology about grain industry, when the two parties are engaged in a conversation on the topic of "*Technical Specifications for Steel Storage Silos and Conveyor Systems*", interpreters need to learn about the professional technical knowledge about the grain storage beforehand, especially some of the technical terminologies of that field. At least, interpreters should know what silos are and have an outline in mind beforehand in case of being a layman on the spot of the conversation interpretation. Interpreters also bear the responsibilities to furnish the explanations to those who know little about the professional knowledge of the conversation.

#### 4.3 Ceremony Interpretation

Ceremony interpretation is usually an inevitable formal event for the opening or closing ceremony which consists of the host or hostess address, which explains organizational procedure of the whole ceremony; the welcome speech delivered by the organizer's authorities, mainly conveying gratitude for the successful training courses and the support from all the participants and government leaders; the concluding speech addressed by the central government leaders, which is mainly about the appraise and guidance for the courses; as well the speech by the representatives of all the trainees to state their achievement in the courses and thanks to Chinese government and all the Chinese staffs. Afterwards, the welcome or the farewell banquet follows.

In most of these circumstances, explanatory interpretation is seemingly redundant. Normally, the time of the ceremony is strictly regulated within 30 or 40 minutes by the Chinese government, and the serious atmosphere also limits much explanation interpretation in the process. Therefore, all the speeches contents are closely related with the project and familiar to all the participants without need for extra explanation.

The following translation serves as an example:

*"Distinguished officials, dear friends,*

*Ladies and gentlemen:*

*Good afternoon!*

*It is my great pleasure to attend this opening ceremony of "Seminar on Food Security for Developing Countries". On behalf of Department of Aid to Foreign Countries, Ministry of the*

*People's Republic of China, please allow me to express my sincere congratulations on the successful opening of the seminar....Chinese government has always attached importance to food security. And regard it as major tasks to safeguard people's vital interests and social harmony.*

*The government has improved the food security system continuously. Chinese government has solved problems of her own food supply, in the same time, she also exports food to developing countries and provided them with emergent food aid. China has maintained food exportation, especially to the least developed countries in Africa under the huge pressure due to the arise of domestic food supply and food prices which is caused by the continuous catastrophes of Wenchuan earthquake, Yushu earthquake, droughts, floods and other natural disasters. China has played a helpful role in the work of protecting the world's food security. China has exported a total number of 86.71 million tons of foods since 2000, including providing dozens of countries with rice, corn and other food aid of 158 batches up to about 300,000 tons..." (Digested Address on the Opening Ceremony of Seminar on Food Security for Developing Countries by Xu Yuanjie, the director of Human Resources Development, Department of Aid to Foreign Countries, Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, June 25, 2010).*

Chinese version: “中国政府始终高度重视粮食安全，将其作为保障人民切身利益和社会和谐的重大工作来抓，不断完善自身的粮食安全保障体系。中国政府在解决自身粮食供给的同时，也积极向发展中国家出口粮食和提供紧急粮援。在因连续遭受汶川地震、玉树地震、干旱、洪涝等特大重大自然灾害导致国内粮食供应和粮价上涨巨大压力下，中国仍尽力保持了粮食出口，特别是对非洲部分最不发达国家的出口，对维护世界粮食安全起到了积极作用。2000年以来，中国累计出口粮食 8671 万吨，包括向十几个国家提供大米、玉米等粮援 158 批，约 30 万吨（节选自国家商务部援外司人力资源开发处处长徐元杰在‘发展中国家粮食安全研修班开班典礼’上的致辞，2010 年 6 月 25 日）”。

Because of the special audience who are the professional experts and technicians in field of grain security, it is not necessary for the interpreter to interpret with explanations. But if the audiences are interested in some unknown words, such as “Yushu” or “Wenchuan”, they might ask about the details in a suitable situation after the speech.

#### *4.4 Negotiation Interpretation*

Negotiation interpretation is a very significant part in the communication and cooperation between China and other foreign countries in the fields of economy, culture, education, scientific technology, etc.

There are many incentives for China to carry out negotiation. In negotiation typical negotiation meeting, the two parties first introduce the cooperation background and the purpose of both sides, and then discuss the style and contents of the cooperation. If both sides reach a satisfactory agreement and have the intention of further cooperation, they will sign the agreement or memorandum afterwards or confirm another suitable time to hold the signature ceremony. Interpreters need to compile a memorandum of the meeting and draft an agreement according to the negotiation meeting.

Interpreters play a decisive role for the success of the negotiation. The interpretation must be accurately and promptly conveyed to the participants and the interpreters should coordinate between the two parties if there are some problems that cannot be solved on the spot. They may give some reasonable suggestions to the parties to discuss it later for the continuity of the negotiation. Hence, the interpreters are more than language transmitters. They are actually the coordinators and the guides in the negotiation and they must master the interpretation skills with rich field experience.

Here is an example of a memorandum for the interpreters during the negotiation interpretation. This memorandum of understanding is between Henan University of Technology and University of Reading, UK, for the development of academic cooperation. The brief explanations to the background of the cooperation are necessarily to both parties since not all the participants presenting the meeting know specifically about the program.

*“Since the establishment of the joint education program between Henan University of Technology (HAUT) and the University of Reading (UOR) in 2003, the courses for the project students have been implemented successfully. The two parties have successfully exchanged lots of students in these years. Based on the successful cooperation, the Vice-Chancellor Professor Gordon Marshall and the Head of Chemistry, Food Biosciences & Pharmacy School, Dr. George Marston in Reading University have paid a visit in the Laboratory of Grain, Oil and Food College in Henan University of Technology on 16th October 2006 and exchanged ideas with the students in International College. In order to improve the new cooperation programs in wider fields, the Head of Chemistry, Food Biosciences & Pharmacy School of Reading University and the faculty of the Chemistry and Engineering College of HAUT have made a further negotiation on conducting a wider cooperation field with the following common understanding”.*

This part of interpretation with explanations is very helpful for both parties to reach a mutual understanding about the original start and the background of the cooperation aiming to obtain further cooperative achievements.

#### *4.5 Cultural Interpretation*

Regarding cultural interpretation, foreigners need to pay visits or have investigations in factories, schools, companies, enterprises, rural areas or other places. Foreign visitors often need to collect some detailed first-hand information related to their research areas and ask many specific questions that they are interested in.

For example, when some foreign experts are visiting an agriculture institute in China, they show their great interest in the development of China's rural areas in recent years and request to visit some typical rural areas. Sometimes they will ask the interpreters questions such as: “What are the main problems that exist in China's agriculture at present?”; “What measures will China take to solve all these problems?”, etc. Regarding to such frequently asked questions, if the interpreters intend to give them

satisfactory answers, the best ways for the interpreters are to master the background materials in advance and to make detailed preparations for the interpretation.

With the enlarging scale of China's higher education, the construction of university cities in China has sprung up and has become the result of the higher education's reform and development in China. Currently, more than 50 University Cities in China have been established under such the educational policy from the year of 2000 till now. The execution of the University Cities Policy, as well as the universities' amalgamation policy, resulted in the phenomena that the universities have two or three separate campuses, which are distant from each other. Foreigners know little about China's educational policy, so when they visit these separate campuses in universities, they usually feel confused by this phenomenon. An interpreter hereby plays an indispensable role to give the foreigners some additional explanations for better understanding.

During the visits and tourism interpretation, interpreters not only need to answer the questions of the foreigners accurately and promptly but also need to occasionally add necessary explanations on some special background information to help them know more about the aspects they are interested in.

In the tourism interpretation, there are two kinds of situations: (1) the deficiency of information to the target receptors. (2) the redundancy of information to the target receptors. In the former situation, the source text (Chinese) mentions some typical Chinese, such as names, dynasties, literary quotations, festivals, etc. For the general Chinese receptors, it is understandable. However, if the source text was just interpreted into target language directly, without adding some cultural background information, it is difficult for the foreign visitors to understand the target text since they do not share the same culture with Chinese. In this case, we can adopt the method of explanatory interpretation to compensate for the deficiency of information. For the latter, it means that in the source language text (Chinese) there is too much information, which is unnecessary for the target receptors to know or it is too difficult for them to understand. In this case, if we do not remove information in the target language text, the receptors may lose interest. Therefore, in this situation, the interpreter can also take the method of explanatory interpretation.

Explanation means to show the meaning of the words, phrases or sentences. For example, 孤山 Gu Shan (Solitary Hill), 四姑娘山 Siguniang Shan (Four Girls Mountain), 花港观鱼 Hua Gang Guan Yu (Viewing Fish at Flower Harbor), 九寨沟 Jiuzhai Gou (Nine Stockades Valley). The explanation method can well help the Westerners know the literary meanings of these tourism words and phrases.

Here is another example of explanatory interpretation in the tourism context. The Chinese version is:

“北京仿膳餐厅的招牌大餐“满汉全席”，共有 108 道菜。据说，要十个人三天才能吃完。今天仿膳满汉全席分大满汉和小满汉两种。大满汉一桌 6 万，只选全席部分进精品菜的小满汉 8 千-1.5 万。价格不菲，但仍然有食客慕名而来”。

The interpretation with explanations should be as follows:

*“The Qing Dynasty was toppled in the 1911 Revolution. In 1925, a former imperial chef named Zhao Rongzhai started Fangshan Restaurant—‘Fangshan’ literally meaning ‘imitation of the*

*imperial cuisine'. The most famous of Fangshan are so called 'Man Han Quan Xi', a set of six banquets with a total of 108 courses in authentic Manchu and Han Chinese styles to be consumed by ten diners in three days. The price is 60,000 Yuan (US\$7,255) for a complete set of 'Man Han Quan Xi' banquets, and up to 16,000 Yuan (US\$1,938) for 'modified' set. Fangshan's managers say that despite the fabulous price, such banquets sell well, mostly ordered by business tycoons from the abroad. The most famous Fangshan diners, however, include President Richard Nixon of the United States, Prime Minister Edward Heath of Britain and former Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka of Japan, who were guests of the Chinese Government".*

In the English version, the interpreter adds a lot of background information. For example, the origination of the restaurant and its meaning, in order to let the foreigners know clearly how famous it is.

#### 4.6 Academic Interpretation

Academic interpretation has a higher requirement for interpreters than the reception interpretation or visiting and tourism interpretation. First, there will be a large audience from different fields and of different levels, among which some of the audience are even administrators or professors of high ranks. To fulfill the interpretation task, the interpreters are required to have excellent psychological qualities, an excellent command of English and rich skills for unexpected circumstances. Second, since the academic lectures or seminars are serious and professional, the interpreters have to fully prepare for the lectures or seminars in advance. Possibly, they can make an appointment with the lecturers for a prior understanding on the academic subject or ask for their lecture notes for preview. This prior preparation can help the interpreters become familiar with the academic subject as well as with the accent and pronunciation of the speakers to guarantee the faithfulness and success of any on-the-spot interpretation.

For example, as a foreign affairs interpreter in my university, I have undertaken a task to interpret for the "China-Switzerland Bulk Grain New Technology Seminar" held in Zhengzhou city, sponsored by the State Administration of Grain in China. On the seminar, although the participants from foreign countries are all well-known experts or professors in the grain industry, foreigners may not know as much as Chinese about China's current grain policies and industry development situation. The necessary explanations to some professional terminologies should be interpreted to foreigners. For example, the term of "Four Bulks (四散化)" is stressed by the director of the State Administration of Grain in his opening address, but foreigners possibly do not understand the term. To reach the interpretation's effectiveness, I added some explanations to overcome each possible misunderstanding. The term of "Four Bulks" is interpreted as "Bulk Storage, Bulk Transportation, Bulk Loading, Bulk Unloading (散储、散运、散装、散卸)" owing to my full preparations for the relevant grain information beforehand. Suppose I did not do any preparation work beforehand, the interpretation will not be so



successful and satisfied. Furthermore, a bad impression on the international seminar will be left to the foreigners, which will directly influence China's international image.

As we know, traditional Chinese medicine is very popular and well-known in the world. An interpreter in the medicine field must master the professional terminology and use the method of explanatory interpretation to facilitate the mutual understanding, such as “针灸学” “Science of Acupuncture and Moxibustion of Traditional Chinese Medicine”; “中医推拿学” “Science of Tuina of Traditional Chinese Medicine”; “伤寒” “Cold Pathogenic Disease”; “瘟疫” “Epidemic Infectious Disease”; “疟疾” “Malaria”; “哮喘” “Asthma”; “中风” “Apoplexy”, etc. Interpreters may add some explanations of these typical traditional Chinese medical terminologies to foreigners to help them gain a better understanding. But first of all, interpreters themselves have to master these professional academic terms.

The main purpose of academic interpretation is to convey the academic information in different fields to all the audience, hence, if there is something incomprehensible on the subject, chart or slides, interpreters should politely ask the foreign experts for a clearer account on the spot, and then make a supplementary explanation to the audience. Interpreters should not feel shameful when they encounter some words or sentences they do not understand. As a matter of fact, interpreters should modestly communicate with the speakers for accurate interpretations. This is the basic professional morality for interpreters to avoid scrambled interpretation, uncontrolled interpretation, unrestricted interpretation and indiscriminate interpretation.

#### *4.7 Interpretation of Hot Modern Words and Popular Cyber Phrases*

Not only in the cases of China-Aid Projects, but also in common people's daily life, hot latest words and net popular phrases are sometimes not that easy to understand unless some explanation interpretation are provided. Here are some examples from the journal “Women of China (October 2013, p15)” which is targeting international readers.

“Nibbling Chair-occupying Clan (啃椅族)”, refers to “People, often students or couples, who buy a small item, such as a drink, at a fast-food outlet, but stay there for a whole day”. If the interpreter states the “Nibbling Chair-occupying Clan” directly to the audience, it might cause confusing to them. In this case, the explanatory interpretation is necessary for better understanding and communication.

Another example is the term “The Third Space (第三空间)”. People who judge from the literal meaning will think of a house or a square not that important, while some other people will be puzzled without any idea. In fact, “The Third Space” refers to a convenient toilet that has been built for the disabled, the elderly and the young, as it allows a relative of different gender to stay and help. If interpreters do not know the real meaning of this phrase, it may cause misunderstanding. Therefore, to command the hot modern words and popular cyber phrases is very practical and important for interpreters for seamless communication.

## 5. Application and Limitations of Explanatory Interpretation Strategy

Explanatory interpretation is obviously an effective approach that overcomes the problem of inaccurate translation among different languages. Meanwhile, it can make the translated text more faithful to the original and more conformed to the custom and rules of translated text with fewer notes so as to improve the readability.

Explanatory interpretation has been studied extensively both in China and across foreign countries. In 1979, the Reform and Opening Policy was implemented in China, which opened a brand-new page in the very long history of international communication. In April, 1987, Duan Liancheng, a scholar who took the job of foreign affairs for many years, wrote the first academic work “How to Help Foreigners Know China” in terms of foreign communication and external publicity, in which the critical function of explanatory interpretation in foreign publicity was put forward for the first time. In 1990, Duan Liancheng’s article “Appealing: Colleagues in translation circle coming to concern foreign publicity” writes that a flexible translation prescription for dead translation and mechanical translation, etc., namely explanatory interpretation in general foreign publicity resulted from the huge culture differences between China and foreign countries. He compared the theoretical standard of China’s “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance” and one of the most authoritative translation theory “Equivalence Theory” by Eugene Nida. The opinion of the necessity of explanatory interpretation is also mentioned in Nida’s “Equivalence Theory” and Newmark’s “Communicative Theory”.

Explanatory interpretation is important because of the close association between a language and its cultural background. As a tool of recording the life course and ideology, each language has its rich culture background and history features. Under the context of cultural globalization, translation needs not only to interpret the literal meaning of the original text, but also to convey the culture information embodied in the original language effectively which enables the listeners to know more about the original culture. Practically, many Chinese-to-English interpreters lack “the ideographic consciousness” in translation practices because they are interfered by the mother language (Yang, 2002, pp. 16-19). This brings about wrong interpretation, misinterpretation of the culture essence or the original meaning. Therefore, in order to better convey the meaning to western listeners in cross culture communication, explanatory interpretation is bound to help and improve the deficiency in translation.

The advantages of explanatory interpretation are: (1) be rich of more political significance; (2) no limits on the length of explanation for the purpose of understanding of the listeners; (3) be aimed at listener more purposefully; (4) be restricted by environment of the language content; (5) be more flexible; (6) the interpreter’s initiative are stronger and the requirement of the interpreter’s responsibility is higher; (7) more human and easier to communicate with; (8) to realize the purpose of functionalist Skopos Theory.

Practically, there are many limitations for explanatory interpretation because not all the occasions or events need explanation. The explanatory interpretations are not needed under the following situations: formal conference, international forum, simultaneous interpretation, the interpretation time is limited,

both parties are professional and familiar with the talk contents, etc.

The disadvantages of explanatory interpretation are: Once the interpreter cannot master the chance and add the explanatory interpretation at random without any thinking about the situation, it will lead into: (1) interrupt both parties' thinking, or continuity and fluency of communication; (2) overemphasize the subjectivity of interpreter which inappropriately dominates the main speaker; (3) prolong the time of talking; (4) easy to be off the subject.

## 6. Conclusion

In this globalized world, as China is opening up wider to the outside world, the importance of foreign languages, particularly English, cannot be underestimated or overestimated. English has become a crucial bridge and belt for international communication. With the improvement of foreign language proficiency in China, demand for qualified interpreters and translators is not diminishing, but increasing. Hence, the social status of interpreters and translators has been enhanced. We therefore must live up to the expectations of this trend. Practically, there still exist many problems in the quality, intelligibility, and acceptability of interpretations. Accordingly, the urgent need for professional and efficient interpreters with high qualities is manifested in China's international communication, but how to convey the truth of the development and conduct of the country to the world is a topic worthy of study for the interpreters in international communication work. That is the reason why I choose the explanatory interpretation method in China's international communication in this article.

Different languages predispose their speakers to think in different ways, so different languages reflect different cultures. Accordingly, among the various interpreting methods, explanatory interpretation is an important and practical method of transplanting cultures for China's international communication. As a matter of fact, explanations exist all the time and everywhere during the interpretation procedure. In short, the successful interpretation in China's international communication is closely related to the development of China. Based on the foregoing analysis, I believe that the method of explanatory interpretation will definitely promote the quality of China's international communication and the interpreters should judiciously apply this method to the practical international communication for the credibility and representability of interpretation. It is expected that with the joint efforts of the researchers and interpreters in international communication of China, it will raise more and more attention on interpretation studies, and inspire more interpretation endeavor to get China better understood.

Besides, there are spacious development fields to further this research. First, interpreters or the researchers should make more efforts for promoting explanatory interpretation method in application of foreign affairs. We are supposed to take the honorable responsibility to make this method well known by more and more people in the translation field. Second, the practical cases of explanatory interpretation method ought to be discovered from more industries and situations for the deeper investigation and research. Third, except for the perspectives of culture, grammar and context

explanation, we can also set off the research from the perspectives of linguistics and literature in support of other theories to prove the practicability of explanatory interpretation. All in all, the explanatory interpretation method is widely used and indeed helpful in interpretation practice for those English teachers and learners, although it is not yet researched comprehensively. The article, hopefully, can promote the development of interpretation method and attract the attention from more people in the domain of interpretation.

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## Notes

Note 1. This database is collected from “the China-Aid Project Whitepaper” of April 21, 2013, issued by Chinese government.

Note 2. The Test for English Majors (TEM) is mandatory for English majors, for whom passing the TEM-4 is a graduation requirement. TEM-8 (“Band 8”) is the highest level for English major students, which is to be taken during the end of the last academic or senior year.

Note 3. The College English Test (simplified Chinese: 大学英语考试; traditional Chinese: 大學英語考試; pinyin: Dàxué Yīngyǔ Kǎoshì), better known as CET, is a national English as a foreign language test in the People’s Republic of China.

## Appendix

### Evaluation on Training Program Questionnaire (Issued by Commercial Ministry of China)

Full Name of Training Program: Training Course on Grain Storage Technology

Place of Training: Zhengzhou, Henan, China Start/Stop Time: July 21, 2008-August 4, 2008

Full Name of Coordinator: Henan University of Technology

Thank you for your participation in our training program! Please fill in the following questionnaire for the improvement of our work! Thank you for your cooperation!

Question types	No.	Questions	Choices				
Evaluation on training content	1	Is the content of this training program systemic and integrated?	Yes	No			
	2	Training courses Of this training program					
		Course 1	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
		Difficulty degree	Just right	Too difficult	too simple		
		Teacher	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
		Foreign language fluency of teacher or interpreter	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
		Teaching Materials or Handout	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
		Course 2	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
		Difficulty degree	Just right	Too difficult	too simple		
		Teacher	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
		Foreign language fluency of teacher or interpreter	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
		Teaching Materials or Handout	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
		Course 3	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
		Difficulty degree	Just right	Too difficult	too simple		

		Teacher	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Foreign language fluency of teacher or interpreter	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Teaching Materials or Handout	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Course 4	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Difficulty degree	Just right	Too difficult	too simple	
		Teacher	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Foreign language fluency of teacher or interpreter	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Teaching Materials or Handout	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Course 5	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Difficulty degree	Just right	Too difficult	too simple	
		Teacher	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Foreign language fluency of teacher or interpreter	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Teaching Materials or Handout	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Course 6	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Difficulty degree	Just right	Too difficult	too simple	
		Teacher	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Foreign language fluency of teacher or interpreter	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Teaching Materials or Handout	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Course 7	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Difficulty degree	Just right	Too difficult	too simple	
		Teacher	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Foreign language fluency of teacher or interpreter	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Teaching Materials or Handout	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Course 8	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Difficulty degree	Just right	Too difficult	too simple	
		Teacher	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Foreign language fluency of teacher or interpreter	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Teaching Materials or Handout	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Course 9	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
		Difficulty degree	Just right	Too difficult	too simple	

		Teacher	Excellent   Good   Fair   Poor
		Foreign language fluency of teacher or interpreter	Excellent   Good   Fair   Poor
		Teaching Materials or Handout	Excellent   Good   Fair   Poor
		Course 10	Excellent   Good   Fair   Poor
		Difficulty degree	Just right   Too difficult   too simple
		Teacher	Excellent   Good   Fair   Poor
		Foreign language fluency of teacher or interpreter	Excellent   Good   Fair   Poor
		Teaching Materials or Handout	Excellent   Good   Fair   Poor
		Course 11	Excellent   Good   Fair   Poor
		Difficulty degree	Just right   Too difficult   too simple
		Teacher	Excellent   Good   Fair   Poor
		Foreign language fluency of teacher or interpreter	Excellent   Good   Fair   Poor
		Teaching Materials or Handout	Excellent   Good   Fair   Poor
		Course 12	Excellent   Good   Fair   Poor
		Difficulty degree	Just right   Too difficult   too simple
		Teacher	Excellent   Good   Fair   Poor
		Foreign language fluency of teacher or interpreter	Excellent   Good   Fair   Poor
		Teaching Materials or Handout	Excellent   Good   Fair   Poor
Comprehensive evaluation on training program	3	Classroom and teaching equipment	Excellent   Good   Fair   Poor
	4	The number of lecture courses	Just enough   Too many   Too few
	5	Relationship between field trips and the theme of training program	Closely related   Related Not so related   No relation
	6	Duration and number of field trips	Just enough   Too many Too few Too long   Too short
	7	Duration of the training program	Just enough   Too long   Too short
	8	The training program will be helpful to your job in future	Strongly agree   Agree   Disagree Strongly disagree
	9	The training program will promote the cooperation between your country and China in relevant fields	Strongly agree   Agree   Disagree Strongly disagree
	10	Organization and management by the training organizer	Excellent   Good   Fair   Poor

Evaluation on Management	11	Attitude of Chinese staff	Very warmhearted   Warmhearted Not so warmhearted   Indifferent			
	12	Management ability of Chinese staff	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
	13	Foreign language fluency of Chinese staff	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
others	14	Condition of accommodations	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
	15	Location of accommodations	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
	16	Food Service	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor