Difficulties and Strategies in Business English

Terminology Translation

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Business English is playing an increasingly important role in Sino-US trade. Among them, the translation of business English terms plays a vital role in the accuracy and legitimacy of trade contracts, business letters, and other business documents. Correct translation of business English terms can avoid trade disputes and improve business efficiency. This paper aims to explore the translation strategies of business English terms by analyzing the characteristics of business English and the translation difficulties of business English terms caused by them.

Keywords: business English, terminology translation, business English terminology, difficulties and strategies

Characteristics of Business English and Quality of Interpreters

Business English is a derivative of English and is the application of English in business situations. The goal of business English is to use the most accurate and clear business language for the most effective business communication and exchange (Xiong & Yang, 2009). Due to the development of the world economy, business English has become an important applied discipline, playing an important role in international business, international trade, international logistics, and other fields. Understanding the characteristics of business English helps us grasp the basic rules of business English teaching, research, and translation. Business English is characterized by strong professionalism, polysemy of one word, concise expressions, and continuous development and change (Xu, 2006).

Professionalism is strongly reflected in its vocabulary. Business English involves various aspects of professional knowledge and covers various disciplines. Therefore, it is necessary to accurately remember these different professional terms when learning and applying business English. On the other hand, the polysemy of business English vocabulary means that one word has two or more meanings. If these polysemy words are not paid attention to in the process of enterprise use, it is easy to cause mistakes in business documents, thus affecting business communication, and even more serious may cause misunderstanding. Business English is also characterized by concise expressions. Modern business English, especially in business letters, is used by eliminating unnecessary redundant words and avoiding repetitive words. In today’s commercial era, fast and simple business communication is very important for every enterprise. In addition to the above characteristics, due to the continuous development of today’s times, business English is closely related to today’s political,
economic, cultural, and other activities, so with the rapid changes in these fields, business English diction is constantly developing and changing.

Due to the above characteristics, professional terms emerge endlessly in the vocabulary of business English, making it very difficult to translate. Therefore, business English translators need to have excellent Chinese and English skills. They should not only understand the characteristics of the English language and skillfully use it, but also carefully study the extensive and profound Chinese language. In addition to bilingual ability, as business covers a wide range of contents, translators also need to understand professional knowledge in finance, trade, market, logistics, accounting, and other fields, so it is necessary to read and accumulate extensively in daily life.

**Features and Difficulties of Business English Terminology Translation**

Business English translation contains a large number of professional terms, so the accurate application of common terms is very important in translation (Liu & Ma, 2008). In addition, due to the accuracy and professionalism of business English itself, our first task in translation is to unify and correct all terms. If the term translation is not clear and unified, the concept will also be unclear and unified (Zhang, 2002), which will do great damage to the study of business English and have an immeasurable impact on the use of business English. The result of term translation is the formation of “equivalent terms representing the same concept” between different languages (Feng, 1997). This is enough to show the importance of term translation to the development of business English. The characteristics of business English terms themselves also constitute difficulties in translation. When translating business English terms, we should pay attention to the following characteristics and difficulties:

**Too Many Acronyms**

Due to the conciseness of words and sentences in business English, abbreviations are usually used to shorten the length of terms. Acronyms are too short to read. Although some professional business English terms seem to be short acronyms, they have specific meanings and scientific concepts. For example, in international trade, the term “FOB” stands for “Free on Board”, and in Chinese it should be translated into “离岸价格”. However, even if we understand the translation of Chinese terms, if we are not familiar with relevant trade knowledge and do not know the meaning of terms, the translation of the whole business text will be foggy.

**The Polysemy Phenomenon Appears Frequently**

Many common English words have a common meaning in business English, and are developed into a professional vocabulary (Song, 2010). Some specialized words have different meanings in different disciplines. For example, “due” means “expire” (到期) in ordinary English, but “account payable” (应付款) in business English. And for another example, “trust” could be translated into “信任” in ordinary English but “信托” in business English, which means a special property management system and legal action, and also a financial system. “Equity” means “fair” in common English, but it means “a most common form of stock” or “the difference between the total value of an asset and the liabilities it contains” in business English, so it should be translated into “普通股” or “资产净值” in Chinese. What’s more, it can also be translated into “衡平法”, which means “a law applied to civil cases” in legal English. The above cases prove that polysemy brings great difficulties to the translation of business English terms and translators need to pay attention to it.
Difficult to Balance the Nomenclature Translation and Interpretation Translation

Due to the constantly changing characteristics of business English, the professional terms in the field of business English are also constantly developing and changing. New terms will appear from time to time, and some old terms will be eliminated or changed because they cannot keep up with the new connotations given by The Times. Therefore, encountering new terms in translation often leaves the translator at a loss. In this case, translators usually adopt nomenclature translation, that is, to create corresponding new terms (Zhang, 2002) for terms with vacancy in the target language by nomenclature, and interpretive translation, that is, to translate terms by interpretive method. Of the two methods, the former is very difficult, and the newly created words must go through a comprehensive consideration before they can be accepted by the professional field and become the new circulating terms. The latter is too complicated, easy to make the terminology lose professional and simple, and does not conform to the characteristics of concise business English.

Many Translators Have a Strong Sense of “Individuality”

Business English belongs to humanities and social sciences. Humanities and social sciences is a discipline closely related to People’s Daily economic, social, and cultural life and language learning, and there are extensive and complex connections within and outside the discipline itself. Therefore, we are often faced with many choices when translating humanities and social sciences terms (Wei, 2010). As there are many choices and business English is widely related to daily life, translators tend to show strong “personality awareness” in the translation of business English terms, that is, they choose the translation of terms based on their own preferences without careful investigation and research. This makes the translation of business English terms lose its standardization, and even causes the terms to lose their “monotony” and “stability”.

Translation Strategies for Business English Terminology

Restore the Original Text Before Translating

In order to improve communication efficiency and save space, most business English letters contain a large number of acronyms. Business English translators must understand the formation of these acronyms and abbreviations and restore them to the original text. Only in this way can translation be standardized and standardized (Xiong & Yang, 2009). After the translation is restored to the original text, it is necessary to pay attention to the overall query of the phrase, if the exact meaning cannot be found, and then separate the phrase, a single word query. This is because the current business English terms are not standardized enough, and some terms are translated into different forms to form different abbreviations. At this time, the exact meaning of the terms can only be determined through the query of single words and the final combination.

Determine the Connotation According to the Subject

One of the characteristics of English words is polysemy. The same word may be different terms and have different meanings in different disciplines. Therefore, when translating, we should first determine whether the word is a term through the context, and then query the correct translation of terms in the corresponding field through Terminology Online, CNKI Terminology Assistant, and other auxiliary tools.

Familiarize Yourself With Professional Knowledge

Business English term translation, in addition to excellent bilingual ability, but also familiar with business knowledge. For example, when translating business letters, it is necessary not only to understand the format of business letters and be familiar with English expression methods, but also to understand the product knowledge,
trade knowledge, accounting knowledge, insurance knowledge, commercial law knowledge, and so on involved in business letters. If they do not understand these knowledge, the interpreter is likely to cause great commercial losses due to improper understanding when translating.

**Conform to International Practice**

In the translation of business English terms, we should also pay attention to business practices. Due to the humanistic and social science attributes of business English, the translation methods of some terms have not been unified, and terms with the same meaning may have different expressions. Sometimes, in business contacts, the way of translation of these terms is not unique, as long as both parties can understand their connotation, but in international business, many terms have their own unique expression, so translators should bear in mind in the translation of their own “personality consciousness”, and follow the convention of international general terms.

**Conclusion**

Business English specialized words, polysemy, concise, and constantly change wait for a characteristic, caused when making their professional terminology translation acronym, polysemy phenomenon more serious; name translation and interpretation is not good balance and translation difficulties of the translator’s personality consciousness are strong; it’s required us to work harder in translation. When encountering an acronym, it is necessary to restore it to the original before translating. When encountering polysemy, we should pay attention to determine its connotation according to the discipline. In addition, the translator should strive to be familiar with the knowledge of various business fields, abide by international terminology conventions, and take terminology translation seriously.

**References**


