

Diplomatic Interpreting Within the Context of Relevance Theory

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Abstract

Diplomatic interpreting has been an outstanding activity throughout history. Diplomatic interpreting and interpreters have always played major roles in facilitating communication between nations and peoples. In this respect, diplomatic interpreting shaped the course of history during a series of periods ranging from the signing of ancient agreements to colonization and modern time negotiations. With a historical perspective, interpreters have made a tremendous contribution to international relations and ensuring accurate communication between the peoples and cultures. This study aims to delve into the interplay between the renowned Relevance Theory, as a leading communication theory which was on many occasions studied mostly within the scope of Translation Studies and intends to contribute to the filling of a vacuum by adapting this theory to Interpreting Studies. It attempts to find an answer to the research question of 'How can the Relevance Theory be applied to diplomatic interpreting?' This study accordingly focuses on the interplay between Relevance Theory and diplomatic interpreting. The study avoids reaching any final judgements as regards the scope that Relevance Theory could be applied to diplomatic interpreting as this study is part of an ongoing PhD dissertation. Besides, the study limits itself with studying the possible impacts that the Theory has on interpreting practice at a diplomatic setting; in other words, applying the theoretical assumptions of Relevance Theory to diplomatic interpreting.

Keywords: diplomatic interpreting, relevance theory, interpreting studies, translation studies, cultural equivalence

BAĞINTI KURAMI KAPSAMINDA DİPLOMATİK SÖZLÜ ÇEVİRİ

Öz

Diplomatik sözlü çeviri, tarih boyunca öne çıkan bir faaliyet olmuştur. Diplomatik sözlü çeviri ve tercümanlar ülkeler ve halklar arasında iletişimi kolaylaştırmak bakımından her zaman önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Bu itibarla diplomatik sözlü çeviri kadim anlaşmaların imzalanmasından kolonileşme ve modern dönemlerin müzakerelerine varıncaya kadar bir dizi dönemde tarihin seyrini şekillendirmiştir. Tarihsel bir bakış açısıyla tercümanlar, uluslararası ilişkilere muazzam katkılar yapmış ve halklar ve kültürler arasında doğru iletişimi sağlamışlardır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, bugüne kadar daha ziyade Yazılı Çeviri Çalışmaları bağlamında çalışılmış önde gelen bir iletişim kuramı olduğundan Sözlü Çeviri ile sıkça bilinen Bağıntı Kuramı arasındaki bağlantıları detaylı bir şekilde incelemektir. Çalışma ayrıca Bağıntı Kuramını Sözlü

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Çeviri Çalışmalarına uyarlayarak bu alandaki boşluğun doldurulmasına katkı sunmayı da amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada, 'Bağıntı Kuramı Diplomatik Sözlü Çeviriye Nasıl Uygulanabilir?' sorusuna yanıt vermeye çalışılmaktadır. Bu çalışma halen devam eden bir doktora tezinin parçası olduğundan çalışmada, Bağıntı Kuramının diplomatik sözlü çeviriye uygulanması hususunda kesin yargılardan kaçınılmaktadır. Çalışma, kendisini Kuramın diplomatik ortamda sözlü çeviri uygulaması üzerindeki muhtemel etkilerini incelemekle sınırlandırmaktadır. Bir başka ifadeyle çalışma, Bağıntı Kuramının kuramsal varsayımlarının diplomatik sözlü çeviriye uygulanmasını incelemektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: diplomatik sözlü çeviri, bağıntı kuramı, sözlü çeviri çalışmaları, yazılı çeviri çalışmaları, kültürel eşdeğerlik

INTRODUCTION

Diplomatic interpreting has been an outstanding activity throughout history. Ever since the foundation of state, be it in the ancient or modern form, and the start of diplomatic/commercial relations between states and nations, diplomatic interpreting has come to fore. Diplomatic interpreting and interpreters have always played major roles in facilitating communication between nations and peoples and in shaping the course of history. With a historical perspective, interpreters have made a tremendous contribution to international relations and ensuring accurate communication between the peoples and cultures.

Theories constitute a major part in Translation Studies (TS) linking theoretical approaches with practice. Andrew Chesterman (2014) defines theory as ...a set of concepts and statements (claims, hypotheses) that provides a systematic perspective on something; a perspective that allows us to understand it in some way, and hence perhaps to explain it...' (p., 15). This argument does not only apply to translation studies but may also be extended to include the interpreting studies as well. Arguing that theory covers both translation and interpreting action, Marianne Lederer (2007) defines theory as. '...a set of principles used to explain a class of phenomena...' (pp. 16-17). Furthermore, discussions have been held as to the existence of an interpreting theory where interpreting has either been included into the translation studies or suggested as an independent theoretical approach in respect of its psychological and sociological aspects (Chapelle, 2013, pp. 2-7). In this context, scholars and academics including several linguists and translation theoreticians more have developed numerous theories related to TS particularly since 1960s, and Interpreting Studies (IS) started to develop its own theories back in 1970s, when many scholars including the scholar and professional interpreter Danica Seleskovitch (1975) have come up with offering strategies in a theoretical way in an attempt to put them into practice (Su, 2019, pp. 312-314.). However, it has been TS, as mentioned above, that paves the way forward for developing a new discipline as IS, thus forging theories for IS. In this context, Franz Pöchhacker (1995, p.35) suggests that most of the theories of translation studies also apply to IS. This enables the IS researchers to use the theoretical basis of Translation Studies with a view to studying the interpreting topics in a detailed manner.

Relevance Theory, as a leading communication theory is on many occasions studied within the scope of TS. Furthermore, it is also employed in respect of its implications on interpreting (Diriker, 2018, p.94). However, no study exists in Turkey analyzing the link between Relevance Theory and diplomatic interpreting. This study, therefore, aims to contribute to the filling of this vacuum and add to the nascent literature in IS. This study is an antecedent of an ongoing PhD dissertation regarding the role played by the interpreter at a political/diplomatic setting in transferring culture-specific items. It attempts to find an answer to the research question of 'Whether the Relevance Theory could be applied to diplomatic interpreting' In doing this, the study analyzes the Relevance Theory in detail, and provides an insight into diplomatic interpreting with a brief historical background. Avoiding coming to any final judgements, this study limits itself with studying the possible impacts that the Theory has on interpreting practice at a diplomatic setting; in other words, suggesting a possible relation between the Relevance Theory and diplomatic interpreting.

As mentioned above, this study is a part of an ongoing PhD dissertation which covers an exploratory case study that adopts a fieldwork approach based on qualitative data analysis. Such studies are known to reflect the perspectives of the participants of surveys and/or interviews conducted, as well as in-depth analysis of the perceptions of individuals, and play a vital role in suggesting an answer to the question of the research (Gall et al, 2007, p., 447; Polit and Back, 2014, p.235; Creswell, 2014, p.4; Berg, 2017, p. 12). Besides, Gabriela Saldanha and Sharon O'Brien (2013, pp. 162-168) argue that questionnaires, surveys, interviews, etc. are the main instruments in conducting qualitative research. In this context, this study is based on a qualitative research conducted with the participants (interpreters in this case), and focuses on the question raised during the interviews as: 'Do you consider Relevance Theory as a major theory to be implemented in interpreting and do you think that knowledge of this theory helps particularly in transferring the culture-specific items into the target language at diplomatic/political conferences?' Though several interpreters participating in this study are already cognizant of the Relevance Theory, the details of the theory have been verbally reminded and explained to them for them to provide accurate responses. 21 interpreters participating in the interviews within the context of the PhD dissertation whose part constitutes this present study replied in various ways to this question. 3 of these interpreters are male while the remaining 18 are female. The average age of these 21 interpreters is 40,190 as all interpreters hold a minimum professional experience of 10 years. These interpreters were provided with surveys and several questions in a semi-structured interview. The questions covered by the surveys and interviews were prepared in close coordination and collaboration with the jury members assigned for the PhD dissertation as well as the interpreters who were asked to respond to the surveys and who were interviewed within the scope of this study. The survey is composed of two parts where Part A contains questions that require responses between 1-5 (1 stands completely disagree; 2- stands for disagree; 3- stands for having no idea; 4- stands for agree and 5 stands for completely agree) employing the Likert scale whereas Part B contains open-ended questions that expect the respondents to make comments. The following 7 statements were raised in Part A:

1. I think that the interpreter can adequately transfer the culture-specific items to the target language/culture at diplomatic/political conferences.
2. The transfer of the culture-specific items into the target language/culture (at diplomatic/political conferences) should absolutely be included as a course into the curricula of the Departments of Translation-Interpreting (or Translation Studies).
3. The interpreter assuming an active role bears importance in respect of ending his/her invisibility.
4. While transferring the culture-specific items into target language/culture, the interpreter should behave in a manner to create the same or similar impact in the target language.
5. Interpreting of culture-specific items varies based on the interpreted item, environment, and the interpreter himself/herself.
6. It is not necessary that interpreter transfers the culture-specific items.
7. The interpreter should prepare before the conference with a view to accurately transfer the culture-specific items into the target language.

The following four open-ended questions were asked to the interpreters enabling them to make detailed comments:

- 1- Strategies like domestication, foreignization, suppression, addition, omission, expansion, approximation, paraphrasing, transcoding-calque, etc. are used to transfer source language/culture-specific items into the target language/culture. Which basic method or methods should be preferred in your point of view for transferring the culture-specific items of the source language at diplomatic/political conferences?
- 2- In cases where the interpreter fails to ensure cultural equivalence in respect of transferring culture-specific items from the source language into the target one (cases where it is not possible to transfer such items) which other methods/strategies can the interpreter resort to?
- 3- How in your point of view can the interpreter balance complying with the required norms on one hand, while making accurate decisions under the stressful atmosphere of diplomatic/political conferences?
- 4- Do you, as an interpreter, follow any strategy/method to ensure cultural equivalence? If so, please tell.

On the other hand, while holding the semi-structured interviews the following questions were raised to the interpreters alongside with other relevant questions:

- 1- How often do you interpret at diplomatic/political conferences?
- 2- Do you encounter situations where you are required to transfer culture-specific elements (idioms, proverbs, source language specific concepts or expressions etc.)
- 3- What are the challenges that you face at diplomatic/political conferences in transferring the culture-specific items into the target language?
- 4- What are the strategies that you implement while transferring the culture-specific items into the target language at diplomatic/political conferences?

- 5- Do you make a preparation or use technology for transferring the culture-specific items into the target language at diplomatic/political conferences?
- 6- Have you encountered any major challenge in transferring the culture-specific items into the target language at diplomatic/political conferences in the past five years? If so, how did you handle that?
- 7- Do you consider Relevance Theory as a major theory to be implemented in interpreting and do you think that knowledge of this theory helps particularly in transferring the culture-specific items into the target language at diplomatic/political conferences?

As this study is part of an ongoing PhD dissertation, the responses provided by the interpreters to the surveys and to the first six questions of the interview have not been assessed here, but the main attention focused on the last question of the interview alongside with the responses given by the interpreters as well as their personal observations and experiences at diplomatic/political conferences. In holding this study, the MAXCADA tool was used throughout the whole PhD dissertation including the assessment of the surveys and questions raised to the interpreters. Therefore, the results obtained by this qualitative tool also reflect the responses provided by the interpreters to the interview question related to Relevance Theory. Furthermore, as this present study is a qualitative one, efforts were made to avoid reaching any results that entail a quantitative study. In this context, this present study builds on the permit (dated 25.05.2021 and no. E.24066) granted by the Ethics Committee of Hacı Bayram Veli University of Ankara to conduct such interviews and surveys. Furthermore, the consents of each of the participants were accordingly received to conduct the research.

Apart from this fact, this study also avoids suggesting any finalized or definitive approaches and is based on the assumption that further details may be retrieved by conducting case studies which in any case provide subjective results as is the case in social sciences. Therefore, this study only suggests that Relevance Theory can provide an important input to interpreters especially at a diplomatic setting due to the details and content of the Theory which is assumed by this study to be an appropriate theory applicable to IS.

The following section of the article focuses on the definition, brief history, and practice of diplomatic interpreting while the third section delves into Relevance Theory and its interplay with interpreting. The last section discusses the findings and is the conclusion of this paper.

1. DIPLOMATIC INTERPRETING

1.1 Definition and Brief History

Albeit relatively a new discipline, interpreting has quite a long history. The origins of interpreting may be found in the first interactions amongst human communities who spoke different languages. Interpreting helped throughout the entire human history to bridge the language gap between communities who were engaged in establishing diplomatic relations, conducting business and commercial activities, and even declaring and waging war against one another. Though an important activity, we do not hold sufficient sources regarding interpreting. As Jean Delisle et al. (2012) suggest: 'The history of interpretation, therefore, is one that is problematic,

one in which the ambiguities – not the least of which are those that derive from the inadequacy of written records to take full account of the act of interpreting are bound up in a web of conflicting ideologies, divided loyalties and relations of power’ (p., 279). (The hyphens are left as in the original text without making any amendments).

Although it is not one hundred percent clear when interpreting (particularly diplomatic interpreting) started, historical sources refer to interpreting activities in Egypt and Ancient Greece where interpreters played a pivotal role in facilitating communication between the high classes and the commons. In Egypt interpreters were used in a diplomatic setting to negotiate with other countries (Su, 2019, p.311). As it can be inferred from the scriptures on the nomarch *Haremhab*, interpreters served as an intermediary to request food from pharaohs (Lacorte, 2014, p.313). During the Ancient Chinese period, interpreters, called with different names in different parts of China, facilitated communication inside and outside of the Empire. Mentioned in several literary Latin works, interpreters also played essential roles during the Persian and Greek negotiations (Delisle & Woodsworth, 2012, p.106). In Ancient Greece, interpreters were not attributed much importance as the Greek were not interested in other cultures and languages but still interpreters helped the government officials and philosophers (Lacorte, 2014, p.313). Interpreting was also a major activity during the Roman period and the Medieval Arabic era. Since Latin was the means of communication and the language of the government during the Roman Empire, interpreters were considered prestigious people who played major diplomatic and political roles. Interpreters served as religious intermediaries in the Hebrew society, and in Spain as they played a crucial role in bridging three different faiths (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism) (Lacorte, 2014, pp. 313-316). Interpreters also played a leading role during the Islamic period of the Arabian Peninsula to transfer religious messages to the African languages (Diriker, 2005, p. 86).

Though the Medieval Arabic era is known with the translation of classical Greek works into Arabic and the importance of the Toledo School of the Umayyad era, interpreting was also a critical activity in respect of defining cultural, social, and political relations. During the Medieval Age, interpreting served to facilitate trade as the Venetian and Genoese merchants took the lead and the historical Silk Road connecting Asia and Europe gained in importance (Doğan, 2009, pp. 10-11).

On the other hand, the conquest of the American continent by Columbus was a groundbreaking development in the history of interpreting and training of the natives as interpreters since there was no one who could speak Spanish and the native tongues at the same time. *Malinche* (Doña Marina), a historical figure came to the fore as a major interpreter who did not only ensure communication between the Spanish and the American natives, but also assumed important administrative responsibilities to shape the future of the Continent. This historical breakthrough provided a professional status to interpreting once institutions like courts were established in the Americas (Angelelli, 2004, pp. 8-11). Briefly speaking interpreting in Latin America emerged as a coincidence and was learned in practice (Delisle et al., 2012, p.148).

As the order of vehicular languages shifted from Latin into French, Italian, and Portuguese, interpreting made a great contribution in shaping the human history and gained impetus following Renaissance and facilitated communication among nations and states (Delisle &

Woodsworth, 2012, p.149). Interpreting was also deemed a major diplomatic, commercial, and cultural activity in the Turkish history. Particularly during the Ottoman Era, interpreters coming from different ethnicities and faiths worked at the *Bab-ı Ali* (Sublime Porte) and enjoyed unprecedented advantages and prestige. These interpreters served during diplomatic negotiations and holding other bureaucratic stuff (Diriker, 2005, p.88). Furthermore, these interpreters also assumed important roles ranging from legal activities, local affairs to educational activities (Doğan, 2009, p.18).

As this paper intends to suggest interpreting has been a major activity throughout history and has gained in importance ever since the human communities settled and started to establish close commercial, cultural, social, and/or political relations. The history of interpreting dates to ancient times and interpreting has been on the forefront throughout the entire processes of human history and civilization. Interpreting turned into a more professional activity as it evolved into conference interpreting where diplomacy was the trailblazer. In the following section I analyzes interpreting within the context of diplomatic conferences with a historical approach.

1.2. Diplomatic Interpreting in Practice

As diplomacy gained a lot of ground and international conferences were held, conference interpreting, mostly under a diplomatic setting, came to the fore. French has long been the *lingua franca* of diplomacy and has long served as the means of communication at diplomatic setting. İskit, 2015, p.90) International conferences, though not frequently held, were organized in the second half of the 19th century. Vienna Conference of 1815 and the Berlin Conference of 1878 were good examples that gathered several nations. French assured a secure position as a *lingua franca* of international diplomacy beginning from the Vienna Conference as a shared means of communication was needed and French was considered to serve that purpose better than any other language of the time (İskit, 2015, p.90). Though French dominated these conferences, when then British Premier Disraeli decided to speak English instead of French in the Berlin Conference, not only French's domination was threatened but also a necessity was born to interpret between the two languages. Yet it was the well-renowned Paris Conference of 1919 that not only shaped the international order in the aftermath of World War I, but also paved the way for English to be adopted as an international language alongside with French (Baigorri-Jalon, 1984, p.214).

Paris Peace Conference is a cornerstone in the history of diplomatic interpreting. Both consecutive and simultaneous interpreting modes were used during the Paris Conference which featured interpreters as major actors in diplomacy (Delisle et al., 2012, p.250). The Nuremberg Trials where the Nazi war crimes were tried were held in four languages: English, French, German, and Russian. (Baigorri-Jalon, 1984, p.215). As Delisle et al. (2012, p., 274) suggested "Interpreting and diplomacy have tended to overlap... The further back we go in time, the more difficult it is to draw a clear line between the two...." Interpreters continue to play an essential role in contributing to and shaping diplomacy, conciliation, and disputes among nations (Karakoç, 2015, pp. 90-99). Ebru Diriker (2005, p.90) suggests that 'Interpreting at a diplomatic setting has been one of the most visible types of interpretation during the entire history'. Interpreters also play a major role in addressing cultural problems by engaging in critical decisions with a view to

ensuring cultural adaptations between the two languages they are interpreting from and into (Kohn et al., 1996, p.119). In this context, it is imperative that interpreters be cognizant of the cultural and ideological differences and sensitivities during diplomatic interpreting (Karakoç, 2015, p.86). Interpreters also transfer the sentiments, any affirmative and negative messages, criticisms, admiration, respect, and reprimand, etc. (Karakoç, 2015, p.87). Analyzing interpreting and interpreters with a historical approach Ruth A. Roland (1999, pp. 157-174) suggests that interpreters are now actively engaged in peace talks, settlement of international disputes and have their voice heard mostly in our present time which can be defined as an age of rapprochement in international relations. Therefore, the current conditions of our time redefine the role of interpreters at diplomatic/political settings and impose them new tasks and ensure their active participation in international relations and the negotiation process.

With all this historical background, interpreting (mostly conference interpreting) is gaining in more importance in respect of conveying the messages to the other. The increasing importance of the role played by interpreters at a diplomatic/political setting requires researchers to conduct further studies into the field, as there is still a great vacuum to be filled, and a wide area to explore, as previously noted above.

2. RELEVANCE THEORY

To define the Relevance Theory thoroughly and delve into its details, one should first focus on the definition of relevance and being relevant. Relevance can be associated with several factors like utterances, inferences, ideas, etc. (Horn & Ward, 2004, pp. 73-77). Relevance as a term, entails that the assumptions that interlocutors convey to one another should be considered relevant by the audience (Gutt, 1990, p.4). Therefore, a conveyed message should tally with the intended message in the minds of the sender and the recipient to make sense and qualify as relevant. This renders relevance the most important factor in communication. A mental processing effort is needed to perceive and render the stimulus. Therefore, if individuals exert less efforts to process the stimulus, relevance may be ensured (Gutt, 1990, p.16). This principle is the very basis of the Relevance Theory and bears significance in the interpreting action. It is also an important starting point to understand how the Relevance Theory impacts interpreting. In defining relevance, Sayaka Minewaki, et al. (2005, p. 212.) suggest that relevance can be assessed both in respect of cognition and processing. Relevance can be achieved with high cognition and low processing efforts. In this respect, messages can be conveyed among speakers based on the expectations of the target audience from relevance (Da Silveira et al. 2014, pp. 534-535). Therefore, communication remains meaningful and achieve its goal if the expectations of your interlocutor to understand the message resonates with his/her intention and if your interlocutor thinks your intention is relevant. This present study gives wight on the Relevance Theory as it suggests that this theory may help the interpreter to ensure a sound and significant communication particularly when the interpreter is aware of the importance and details of it.

Based on cognitive understanding, Relevance Theory holds that humans naturally tend to maximize relevance. Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, the founders of the Relevance Theory link

cognition with the efforts exerted to process that cognition. Therefore, if individuals exert fewer efforts to understand the message in a sentence the greater the relevance will be (Lepore et al., 2008, pp. 341-346). According to the Relevance Theory, due to their developed cognitive systems, humans automatically attempt at bringing relevance to the maximum level during a conversation. Humans can automatically identify relevant stimuli, assumptions and use their inferential mechanisms to process these in the most efficient way possible (Horn et al., 2004, p.455). Relevance theory introduced by Sperber et al. aim at explaining how a hearer infers a speaker's meaning depending on the supplied evidence. As Sperber and Wilson suggest, there are two different uses of language: descriptive use and interpretive use. Descriptive use is truth-conditional while interpretive use refers to resemblance. Interpretive use bears utmost importance regarding those utterances which are not literally used. The individual who speaks and is in close connection with the hearer uses the stimulus and ensures that he/she wants to convey a message via communication (Horn et al., 2004, p. 74). Relevance theory focuses on such communication. Relevance is achieved at maximum level when the message conveyed has a high cognitive impact on hearers who are only to exert low efforts to process the message (Minewaki et al. 2005, p. 212). This is an important tenet of the Relevance Theory and puts it in an important situation as regards interpreting. Furthermore, Wilson summarizes the Relevance Theory with four main principles:

“(a) the decoded meaning of the sentence is compatible with a number of different interpretations in the same context; (b) these interpretations are graded in terms of accessibility; (c) hearers rely on a powerful criterion when selecting the most appropriate interpretation; and (d) this criterion makes it possible to select one interpretation among the range of possible interpretations, to the extent that when a first interpretation is considered a candidate matching the intended interpretation, the hearer will stop at this point.” (Wilson 1994 quoted in Brown, 2006, p.44).

Briefly speaking, Relevance Theory holds that humans tend to maximize relevance due to the cognitive structure of humans. Thus, human cognitive system selects relevant stimuli, inferential mechanisms as well as assumptions (Horn et al., 2004, p.,610).

It may, therefore, be concluded that the above-cited main characteristics of the Relevance Theory, several factors play a crucial role in defining the Theory as assumptions which render a communication relevant, the interconnectedness of the conveyed and received messages, exerting fewer efforts, therefore, a low processing to create more relevance and a high cognition, tendency of the interlocutors to maximize relevance in a communication, meeting the expectations of the target audience, tendency to bring a maximum level of relevance at a communication, and the hearer's inference of the intended meaning on the basis of the existing evidence. With these specific traits, the Relevance Theory comes to fore as an important field of research in several disciplines including the IS. As this study concentrates more on IS, it is necessary that the interplay between Relevance Theory and communication be thoroughly understood.

2.1. Relevance Theory and Communication

Relevance Theory is directly related to communication. As detailed above, it is a communication theory. Communication and meaning are the two essential elements in dialogues between human beings. How the communication is held and how the meaning or intention of the

speakers is accurately conveyed are important. In this sense, communication and meaning come to the fore in interpreting. Before furthering the Relevance Theory, I believe that we should first understand how communication and meaning are defined.

Communication refers to an interaction constructing and converting the representations of one side to the other. Therefore, whether the communicated message reaches its goal is of utmost importance here. The accurate transfer of the communicated message from one speaker to the other is based on the "...relevance expectations of the audience." (Da Silveira et al., 2014, p., 533). It, therefore, follows that communication will only be meaningful and reach its goal if it meets the expectation(s) of your interlocutor to comprehend the message as he/she links it with his/her intention and finds it relevant or related to what you intend and what your interlocutor intends to perceive and understand. Sperber et al. (2002, p.583) suggest that 'relevance' drives communication and holds that interlocutors of a communication will only understand one another if they can fulfill their intention, and conveying your intention and its perception by your interlocutor in a communication depends wholly on whether your interlocutor finds you and your message 'trustful' (Sperber et al., 2002, p.584)

As regards the implications between relevance and communication, Ernst-August Gutt (1990, p.4) referred to the basis of Relevance Theory as:

"...the set of assumptions which the communicator intends to convey will be adequately relevant to the audience, and the stimulus produced is such that it avoids gratuitous processing effort on the audience's part.... Hence the less effort the processing of a stimulus requires and the more contextual effects it has, the more relevant it will be."

Consequently, Relevance Theory argues that the necessity of interlocutors to exert less efforts in communication will ensure that the message is more relevant as it is easily conveyed. Conversely, the message and communication will be less relevant or irrelevant which will put the interlocutors in a difficult situation during a communication. In order for us to accurately understand the interplay between Relevance Theory and communication, we should focus on Paul Grice's maxims, notably the 'cooperative maxim' which aims at assuring that communication and intended meaning are properly conveyed and perceived (Stroinska et al. 2018, p. 96). Grice (quoted in Cole et al.1975, p.45) suggests: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged." Grice argues that in line with the cooperative principle, communication and meaning will only be accurate and proper if the four categories (Quality, Quantity, Relation and Manner) are complied with.

Regarding the relationship between Relevance Theory and communication, Wilson argued:

"... sentence meaning is a vehicle for conveying a speaker's meaning, where a speaker's meaning is an overtly expressed intention that is fulfilled by being recognized. The second is that a speaker's meaning cannot be simply perceived or decoded, but has to be inferred from her behavior, together with contextual information. The third is that in inferring a speaker's meaning, the hearer is guided by the expectation that communicative behavior should meet certain standards..." (p.,1).

This argument is important in interpreting action as the interpreter is expected to accurately decode the intended message of the source language not only with the help of lingual expressions but also with that of other communication means. This, therefore, entails the accurate understanding of implicatures. In this respect, Gutt (2010, p.160) holds that implicature goes beyond the expressed idea (explicatures) and argues that it is the Relevance Theory that makes it possible to distinguish the relevance in a communication and entails the interpreter to ensure that explicatures of the source and target languages are kept the same just as the case for implicatures in an interpreting activity. Having said these, we can argue that in maximizing the relevance in a communication it is necessary to properly understand and transfer implicatures as well as explicatures and comply with Grice's cooperative principle in implementing the four main categories. This will not only make a communication or discourse clear but will also determine an accurate interpreting activity. This renders the Relevance Theory more crucial during communication (and during interpreting) and indicates how the Theory plays a pivotal role in facilitating contacts amongst humans.

2.2. The Interplay between Diplomatic Interpreting and Relevance Theory

I try to analyze the link between diplomatic interpreting and Relevance Theory in this section. This study suggests that Relevance Theory is appropriate to draw on as it attributes utmost importance to ensuring a communication between the interlocutors based on mutual and maximum understanding without exerting great efforts. Furthermore, what makes the Relevance Theory pivotal for diplomatic interpreting is the importance that the intended and received messages are harmonious in a communication. As this bears utmost importance in interpreting, Robyn Carston (1998, 179) aptly argues that Relevance Theory is appropriate for interpreting activities as interpreting serves as a mediation between the logical form of communication and the proposed utterance made in the form of explicatures and implicatures. Given the interplay between interpreting and the Relevance Theory, Gutt (1990, p.16) suggests the following:

'What the translator has to do in order to communicate successfully, is to arrive at the intended interpretation of the original, and then determine in what aspects his translation should interpretively resemble the original in order to be consistent with the principle of relevance for his target audience with its particular cognitive environment. Nothing else is needed.'

This explanation clearly shows the inevitable link between translation (and/or interpreting) and relevance. Furthermore, Branca Vianna (2005, p.187) argues that Relevance Theory plays a critical role in explaining interpreter's intended impact on the audience and holds that:

'Relevance Theory can help interpreters have a better idea of the complexity of their task and make them more aware of the importance for the practice of interpreting of concepts like contextual assumptions, the difference between linguistically expressed meaning and intended meaning, etc.'

It is, therefore, obvious that the cognizance of the details of Relevance Theory helps the interpreter perceive the details of interpreting as a painstaking profession and transfer the intended meaning better since the target audience receiving the original message via the interpreter should clearly understand the meaning together with all explicatures and implicatures

especially at a stressful setting like the diplomatic/political conferences. This is also believed to be rendering the Relevance Theory more functional in delving into the interpreting practice. Though several studies have been conducted in literature as regards Relevance Theory, there is a substantial vacuum in the literature in respect of studying interpreting within the context of Relevance Theory.

In supporting the essential role played by the Relevance Theory on interpreting, Gutt (2010, pp. 159-160) believes that the Relevance Theory helps the interpreter understand the target audience's need and ensure that the communicator's intention is understood by the audience as an essential part of communication. Furthermore, Robin Setton (2010, p.3) argues that relevance is the main instrument in interpreting to ensure the conveyance of the same effect and information on the target audience. It is suggested that Relevance Theory helps to achieve an accurate comprehension and ensure a strong interpreting action whereby the interpreter, as a go-between, may receive the intended message of the speaker as a stimulus and create a cognitive, inferential, and contextual effect on the target audience (Al-Kharabshesh 2017, pp. 22-26); Vandepitte (2001, p. 327) ; and Al-Jarrah et al. (2018, pp. 3-7) Therefore, this is in full compliance with the main principle of the relevance Theory as the more the contextual effort the more the relevance will be and the target audience should make less efforts to understand the intended message. This shows that context and relevance are interwoven in interpretation, and that Relevance Theory considers interpreting as a communication means to use the two languages in an interpretive manner (Smith, 2002, pp. 109-110).

Regarding the importance of contextual effect in relevance and interpreting, Gutt (2010, p.134) further notes that interpretation of the original message into the target language is entirely dependent on the context. Gutt (2010, pp. 135-138) believes that a profound knowledge of the context will help the interpreter to eliminate ambiguities and determine and distinguish the explicatures and implicatures whose interpreting into the target language is both problematic and requires further attention. This issue becomes tougher and more difficult to overcome during diplomatic/political conferences which rather offer a more stressful and rigid environment in respect of using the expected words and expressions and attach more importance to every detail in interpreting the messages between the parties. Besides, Sang Zhonggang (2006, pp. 43-44) argues that creating contextual effects plays a major role on the interpretation as the interpreter will combine the new information with the assumption, he/she has in mind to deliver the intended message in an accurate manner. Therefore, the interpreter must create the cognitive and contextual effect on the target audience to make sure that this audience deduces the accurate intention and message, and confirms it in their mind (Minewaki, et al., 2005, p. 211).

The connection between translation/interpreting and the Relevance Theory developed by Sperber and Wilson is referred by Gutt (1990, p.136) as the 'explanatory theory of communication' which aims at explaining the way people convey ideas and thoughts to one another. This theory, therefore, attempts to detail how translation/interpreting helps people communicate. If the interpreter has full grasp of the conditions under which people communicate via interpreting, the interpreting activity might be successful. It, therefore, follows that understanding the Relevance

Theory may facilitate the interpreter's task, and may urge him/her to consider the entire details of communication with a view to conveying the main message together with its intended meaning/explicatures/implicatures. Apart from creating the contextual effect, forging an equivalence between the messages also bears great importance. In this context, Gutt holds that Relevance Theory is adequate to explain and help the interpreter perceive the duty of creating equivalence, resemblance between two languages, and consider the contextual effects and elements (Liu et al, 2016, pp. 49-52). Gutt (1990, p.139) also suggests that Relevance Theory considers interpreting as meaning that goes beyond simply encoding, and the interpreter thus has to balance between what is said by the speaker and thought by the receiver via devising an interpretive resemblance, and help the target audience comprehend the optimally relevant message as the target audience has no other means than the interpreter to accurately understand the message of the speaker.

As detailed above, Relevance Theory might be extremely helpful for the interpreter to transfer the intended message during diplomatic/political conferences with the awareness that the original text should be conveyed to the target language in such a manner that all details like explicatures, implicatures, etc. are taken into consideration, not to mention the requirement of creating the same contextual effect and equivalence on the audience of the target language without driving them into exerting much effort in order to facilitate communication. In this respect, when put into practice, the Relevance Theory is assumed to guide the interpreter in the right and proper way, thus helping him/her conduct a better and appropriate interpreting work at diplomatic/political conferences which have a demanding and strict nature. The details of this observation are further detailed in the section below.

2.3. The Survey Conducted with the Interpreters Regarding Relevance Theory

21 interpreters who participated in the interviews held within the scope of the PhD dissertation from where this paper emanated, were asked whether they take Relevance Theory into consideration during interpreting, thus transferring the message of the source language into the target language. These interpreters were selected amongst those that hold minimum 10 years of professional experience and who have frequently interpreted at diplomatic/political settings. They have all studied or heard of Relevance Theory during their training as an interpreter but were provided with additional information on the Relevance Theory both to deeply understand and recall the details of the Theory. The accounts provided by these 21 interpreters have shown that interpreters do not directly recall the principles or details of an interpreting theory while they are interpreting, and that they are attentively focused on the messages and do not run the risk of distracting their attention at diplomatic/political conferences that bring along a more stressful environment than many others. However, these interpreters have also noted that they are automatically and unknowingly benefitting from the Relevance Theory in respect of conveying the messages accurately and making sure that the target audience easily understands the message or intended meaning without exerting great efforts. In doing this the interpreters responding to the interviews have noted that they are referring to multiple interpreting strategies.

In this regard, all interpreters replying to this question agreed that transferring the intended meaning is of utmost importance and in doing that the interpreter who is cognizant of the Relevance Theory can benefit from the Theory in making sure that the exact meaning is conveyed by the interpreter to the target audience and the target audience can directly grasp the meaning without making much effort. In this sense, the interpreters have also noted that the interpreter should assume any additional burden or effort that may be necessary to accurately transfer the meaning of the source language. One of the interpreters suggested that the interpreter should have a sound preparation before such stressful conferences while many others suggested benefitting from such interpreting strategies as expansion, paraphrasing, deletion, domestication, or foreignization etc. to make sure that the communication between the two sides may be smoothly conducted at a diplomatic/political setting. Furthermore, these interpreters have also underscored that the context, content, and discourse of the diplomatic/political conference should also be deeply investigated and perceived by the interpreter, and added that once interpreters have an in-depth knowledge about the Relevance Theory, they may easily convey the message and put themselves into the shoes of the hearers of the target language. Furthermore, the fact that interpreters already utilize from the principles of the Relevance Theory without even knowing that they are actually referring to the Relevance Theory in action, may be a good indicator of how Relevance Theory is associated with the interpreting action, and may help interpreters more if they are aware that they are actually benefitting from the Relevance Theory while interpreting in such stressful media as diplomatic/political conferences. In this manner, the interpreters who participated in the interviews also noted that once they are aware of the advantages that Relevance Theory may provide them, they will be more attentive in ensuring a better and sound communication and will consider the details of the Theory more during interpreting. Furthermore, one of the respondents agreeing with the idea that Relevance Theory may help interpreters perform a better job during interpreting at a diplomatic/political setting, also reminded that the interpreter assuming the burden and extra effort to communicate the intended message (especially the implicatures, the understanding of which entail further efforts and explanations where necessary) should consider Daniel Gile's 'Effort Model', thus should avoid too much effort that may exhaust the interpreter and may have an adverse impact on his/her performing the interpreting job properly. In this manner, Gile (2009, p. 165) underscores that comprehending and producing the message between two languages require more effort for the interpreter, therefore, while ensuring comprehension the interpreter should not exhaust himself/herself too much by allocating excessive time on understanding the message but should find a way to effectively balancing the efforts. This should also be considered alongside with other suggestions of the interpreters who participated in the interviews. The assumed link between the Relevance Theory and interpreting is further studied below in respect of the inputs provided by the interpreters which are consistent with the view advocated by this study as to the existing connection between theory (Relevance Theory) and practice (interpreting) and the potential advantages that interpreters can benefit from both knowing the theory.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study focuses on the interplay between the Relevance Theory and diplomatic interpreting and sets out to answer the research question of 'whether the Relevance Theory can be applied to diplomatic interpreting' Though this present study never aims at reaching a definitive conclusion by responding to this question with a yes or no, it asserts that there is a strong link between utterances, influences, and ideas. Based on the tenets of the Relevance Theory, it is argued that assumptions of interlocutors are only meaningful if they are considered relevant by the audience. As detailed above, the Relevance Theory suggests that the messages conveyed by interlocutors become meaningful and be clearly and smoothly comprehended by the target audience if the target audience exerts less efforts and has a clear stimulus to render the meaning more relevant. This entails that the messages reach the expectations of the target audience and make sure that expectations of the interlocutors are conforming to their intentions in a communication. Therefore, what is important during a conversation is whether the interlocutor thinks that your intention is relevant as humans try to maximize relevance in a dialogue or communication. Relevance is the key factor that drives communication.

Given these outstanding characteristics and the interviews held with 21 interpreters- this study argues that Relevance Theory suggests a major theoretical approach in diplomatic interpreting where accurate and precise communication between the two sides bear utmost importance. Depending on the findings of the interviews, this study further suggests that responding interpreters unanimously agree that it is the intended meaning that should be transferred into the target language and once cognizant of the details and importance of the Relevance Theory interpreters indicate that during interpreting they act more consciously in ensuring that the target audience is prone to grasp the intended meaning and the message transferred into the target language makes sense and serves the goal of the interpreter (to transfer the accurate meaning of the source language) when the interpreter realizes that the exerts less efforts to reach maximum understanding and meaning. This urges the interpreter to attribute utmost importance ensuring that the interlocutors of a diplomatic meeting or negotiation fully and correctly understand one another's messages. In doing this, as indicated by the responses of the interpreters, interpreters cognizant of the details and importance of the Relevance Theory tends to hold preparations before the conferences and employs appropriate strategies not only due to the tenets of the Relevance Theory but also due to the stressful and extraordinary circumstances brought by diplomatic/political conferences. The interpreters responding to the interview and particularly to the last question on whether they consider Relevance Theory helpful in transferring the culture-specific items of a source language into the target language at diplomatic/political conferences have also indicated that any misunderstanding at a such a stressful and sensitive setting may result in grave consequences which cannot be tolerated or compensated for. Any message conveyed by either party should not push the target audience to understand and with minimum efforts the audience should have a clear understanding of the original message. In this respect Grice's maxims, notably the 'Cooperative Maxim' comes to fore as communication and intended meaning should be conveyed and received in the best possible way in a diplomatic

setting. Furthermore, it is also extremely important that the implied meaning be transferred. In this regard, use of implicatures alongside with explicatures bears paramount importance for conveying the messages in a diplomatic setting in line with both diplomatic rules and international precedents. As diplomatic settings offer quite tough and difficult conditions, interpreting under such a setting also requires further attention, linguistic skills, and strong efforts to accurately convey and transfer the political messages which may be quite complicated or strenuous. Gutt's suggestion of 'explanatory theory of communication' mostly refers to translation/interpreting as a repetition of the Relevance Theory. In this context, Gutt makes it clear that the interpreter will exert utmost efforts to ensure that the interpreting activity will not simply be limited with encoding and will be extended to give the target audience a detailed and clarified meaning of the original language. held with

Based on the results received from the interviews held with 21 interpreters, this study suggests that that the Relevance Theory can be used as a good instrument by diplomatic interpreters and help them focus more on and better understand the intended message of the speaker. It has been argued by all respondents that Relevance Theory may be helpful to interpreters at a diplomatic/political conference as they acquire more details of the Theory and realize that they are using this theory consciously while interpreting. Therefore, as the respondents said the interpreters may be focusing more on implications which entails the interpreters comply with the cooperative maxim with a view to creating the intended meaning in a communication. As the Relevance Theory focuses on meeting the expectations of the interlocutors in the target language, less efforts are exerted to acquire more contextual outcomes, considering the implications as well as the explicature, and fulfilling the intentions of the source language speaker(s) mostly tally with the expectations of the interpreters who participated in the interviews, this study suggests a close connection between the Relevance Theory and diplomatic interpreting and various advantages that the Theory can provide to interpreters during diplomatic/political conferences. The study also argues that by benefitting from the Relevance Theory, interpreters may primarily endeavor to convey the implied meaning and create the same equivalence on the target audience under a stressful diplomatic setting. The study also considers the fact that this is a hard task that may range from the transfer of both clear and ambiguous meanings between the two languages by considering diplomatic rules and sensitivities.

As suggested by this study depending on the inputs of the interpreters, Relevance Theory is a trailblazing communication theory that can be linked with interpreting in several aspects. The most important impact of Relevance Theory on interpreters may be to ensure that they are well aware of the necessity to convey the meaning into the target language and audience in a manner that the target audience does not exert much effort and can thus easily maximize its understanding of the message of the source text. Furthermore, this study also suggests that Relevance Theory also helps interpreters transfer the implicatures alongside with explicatures which may be a critical task particularly at a stressful diplomatic setting. In this respect, the study aims to bring a new approach suggesting that Relevance Theory has several components related to interpreting which may be expanded to diplomatic interpreting and may help the interpreters to do their job better in

a more conscious way. This study yet limits itself only with focusing on the interplay between Relevance Theory and Interpreting and suggests that this Theory may help the interpreters in conveying their messages more accurately and properly by being cognizant of the details of the Theory and performs the interpreting action in a manner to ensure that the message of the source language may be appropriately transferred into the target language. This study also suggests that once the interpreter grasps the Relevance Theory he/she may focus more on assuring that the target audience acquires the intended message of the speaker(s) of the source language without making further efforts As this study reflects a part of a continuing PhD dissertation, it intends to be contributing to the existing literature and providing input to the future studies that may be held regarding Interpreting and Relevance Theory.

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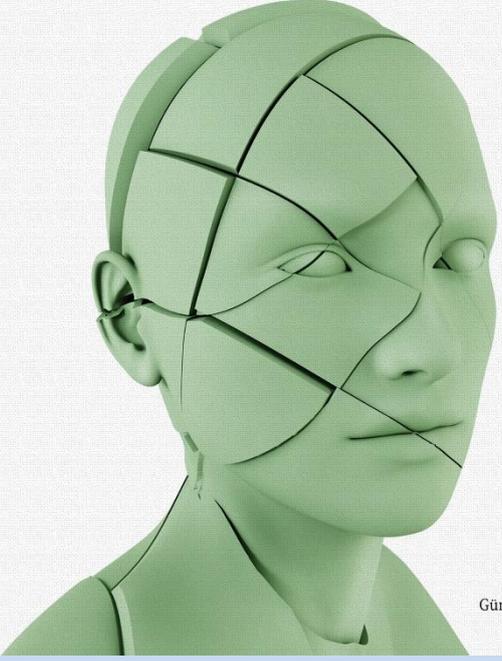
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TÜRK BİLİMKURGU EDEBİYATI VE ARKETİPLER

DR. VELİ UĞUR



Günce Yayınları

Oktay Yivli

Öykü Nasıl Okunur

modern öykü ve yöntem



Günce Yayınları

MAKSUT YİĞİTBAŞ

Edebiyatın Ebemkuşağı

Halit Ziya Hikâyeciliğinde

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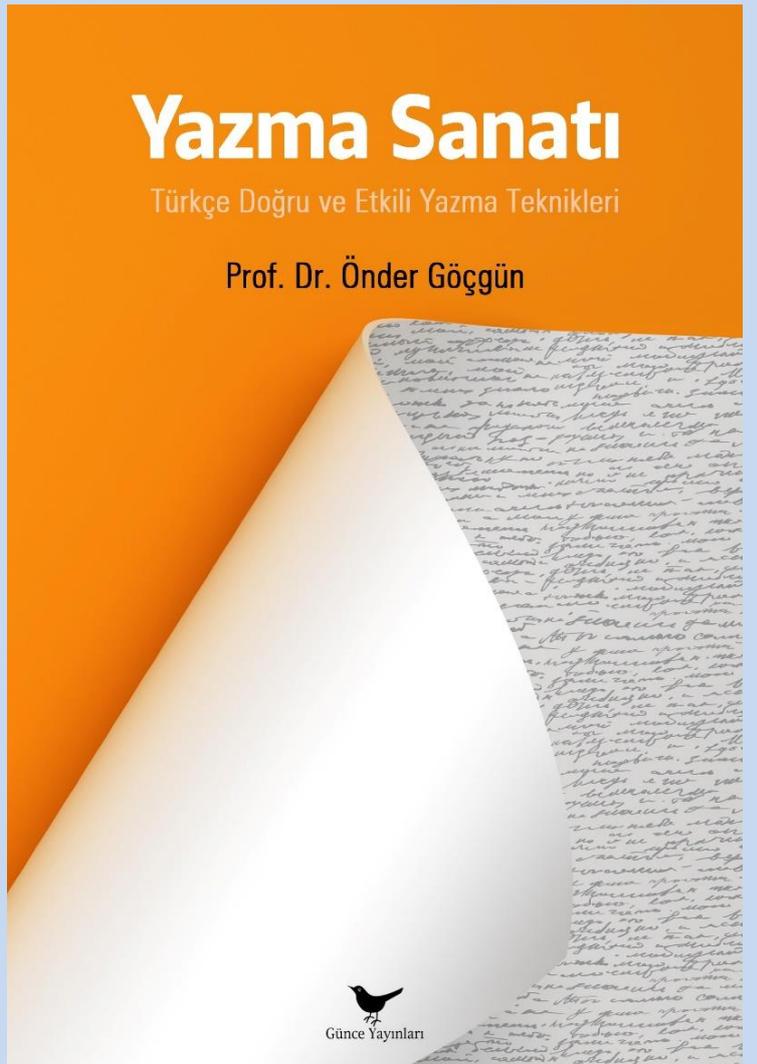


Günce Yayınları

Yazma Sanatı

Türkçe Doğru ve Etkili Yazma Teknikleri

Prof. Dr. Önder Göçgün



Günce Yayınları