



# An Analysis of the Present Situation and Problems of Business English Translation in China

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## Abstract

The studies and practices of Business English translation have been developed rapidly in the last ten years in China with the trend of globalization. However, there are many noteworthy problems and new trends in this field. This paper presents a detailed analysis of the present situation and problems of business English translation in China with the aim to promote the further studies a practice of business English translation.

**Key words:** Business English translation; Present situation; Problems

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## INTRODUCTION

With the development of economic globalization and the China's opening to the outside world, business English translation has become increasingly important. Business English translation has made essential contributions to those non-English speakers who get involved in international business, which greatly improves China's relations and trades with foreign countries. Nowadays, among the international trade activities, business English translation service involves in much broader scope and it covers many fields and has many new trends with the incredible development of information technology such as the new tech of big data, cloud computer, etc..

Business English translation, as a branch of ESP (English for Special Purpose), has its specific features, standards and new trends which also draw a lot discussion and controversy on this issue. Are there enough qualified translation talents in China to satisfy the increasing international market needs? What are the standards and criterion of translation service and translation industry in this new age? Is there systemic study on business English translation in China and what's the present situation of the teaching and training of translation talents in China? This thesis tries to present and analyze the present situations and problems of business English translation in China in order to benefit the further study of the development of business English translation industry.

## 1. OVERVIEW OF BUSINESS ENGLISH TRANSLATION

### 1.1 Definition and Scope of Business English Translation

Business English, as a branch of ESP, refers to the special English that serves for international business routines. The specific way of information transmitting in business activities accounts for the specific features of business English. Business English must be seen in the overall context of English for Specific Purpose (ESP), as it shares the important elements of needs analysis, syllabus design, and materials selection and development which are common to all fields of work in ESP. As with other varieties of ESP, Business English implied the definition of specific language corpus and emphasis on particular kinds of communication in a specific context (Ellis & Johnson, 1994). While Jordan (1997) classified ESP into two categories: a) English for Academic Purpose, mainly adopted in academic study and academic exchange; b) English for Occupation Purposes, mainly adopted in a certain industry with the features of specialty and

practicality. Business English differs from literal English with special stylistic features and characteristics, covering a large scope of fields including advertisement English, logistics English, legal English, financial English etc.. Since 1990s, business English has been developed as one of the most important branches of ESP (St John, 1996). In China, business English has been taught and studied since 1950s and been widely used till 1990s with the deepening of the open policy and the highly integration of world economy.

Business English translation is a dynamic activity which serves as the bridge in the business circles to guarantee the success of business communication and all kinds of business activities. In a narrow sense, business English translation is the activity and service carried out in business operations aiming to get direct economic benefits such as international commodity trade, import and export of labor service, technology transaction, overseas investment, localization of software and website, audio-visual translation and many other fields of international business. The broad sense of business English translation refers to the translation services covering any field and activity related to international business.

### 1.2 Standards of Business English Translation

Standard is the core and foundation of translation which has been studied and discussed for centuries and there is still controversy. Business English translation is a complicated activity involving many influential factors. So it is suggested to adopt multi-standard rather than single fixed one. Many factors have to be taken into consideration such as the purpose of translation, the purpose of original text and author, readers reaction, functional equivalency, stylistic equivalency, requirements of patron and poetic and aesthetic value, etc.. "Loyalty, faithfulness and unification" are the basic principles of translation standard. On the condition of this, the higher standard of business English translation aims to realize dynamic equivalence and functional equivalence which allows adaptations in lexicon, grammar and cultural information to realize the interpersonal function the informative function and the equivalence of readers' reaction of business English completely and naturally in target text. Weng (2013) raises the 4Es standard: a) Equivalence of semantic message of source language and target language; b) Equivalence of stylistic message of source language and target language; c) Equivalence of cultural message of source language and target language; d) Equivalence of business effect of source language and target language. Weng claims that the forth E of 4Es is the final goal of business English translation.

With the development of market economy and the continuing perfection of language service industry, the standard of business English translation should also take all aspects of language service into consideration, apart from the analysis of language and text itself. Some industrial standards have come into being in

recent ten years, such as EN 15038: 2006 made by EU, ASTM F2575—06 by USA, CAN/CGSB—131. 10—200820 by Canada, and LISA (QA Mod-el) based on SAEJ2450 etc.. And since 2003, GB/T 19363. 1—2008, GB / T (19682—2005), GB / T 19363. 2—2006 has been launched by China. This standards and criteria normalize the language service industry from the perspective of infrastructure, human sources, technology capacity, service quality, project management etc., which greatly expand the traditional standards of translation and are gradually developing into a rough system of quality guarantee of language service.

## 2. PRESENT SITUATION OF BUSINESS ENGLISH TRANSLATION IN CHINA

### 2.1 Present Situation of Translation Industry in China

Business English translation has been flourished since 1990s and great changes have taken place in the language service industry in China in recent 10 years with the dramatic development of information technology. The representative features of the era of big data are the vast information, fast transmission speed, huge data structure, large influential scope and high application value. Diversification, fragmentation, multimodling, promptness and mass data become the new chief characteristics of language services which call for brand new challenges for the study and application of translation. Thus some reforms have to be taken to meet with the new requirements of this new era.

The development of globalization and information brings about the rapid growth of the language service market. According to the Common Sense Advisory (2012), the global outsourcing of language service valued 33.5 billion dollars and it keeps sharp increase at the rate of 12.17% per year. And the increase rate of language service industry in China keeps approximately 15% per year while 90% enterprises contents remains untranslated yet, leaving great demand space in this field.

### 2.2 Problems Existing in Business English Translation in China

Great changes and new trends in language service in China invigorate new energy and insight to the business English translation but also bring about some new problems as well.

(a) There are a large number of personnel engaged in business English translation, but there is large shortage of the advanced professional translation talents in China. Based on the investigation from National Bureau of Statistics, there are 700 thousand employees involved in translation service while only 80 thousand of them belong to professional. A great number of graduates majoring in English flush into the translation industry but there's hungry

market for the high-quality applied-type talents equipped with language competence and profound knowledge of international business and cross-cultural communication.

Besides, the qualification of translators is far from satisfactory. Being lack of abundant knowledge of relating industry and for short of cultural awareness, some translators cannot provide high-quality translation service. Some enterprises employ less proficient translators to do the translation just to save money and thus arouse misunderstanding and disputes in international business.

(b) The study on business English translation has not been systematically yet. The study on business English translation has not been developed until 1990s in China. There is still lack of further discussion on the theory and methodology on this issue and the research on business English translation practice is limited. Besides, most researches focus on micro-aspects without adequately innovative ideas. Some researchers just borrow the theories from overseas studies to instruct the translation practice in China while some others tend to create branch new theory divorced from practice just for the sake of innovation.

(c) There are still lack of systematic standards and specifications to normalize the language service industry. The present translation service market involves in a broad range of practitioner staff without agreed industry standard and criterion to normalized the healthy development of translation industry, thus brings about disorder state which is one of the main obstacles for the sustainable development of international business in China. Besides, due to non-proficiency or professionalism, some translators do the business translation loosely which cannot promise the quality of business English translation.

(d) Being lack of cultural awareness in translation is one of the main problems. It's widely accepted that translation is not the delivery and transform of information between languages but also the transmission of culture. Culture plays vital role in international business activities. However, many translators pay much attention to the language and skills while ignoring the cross cultural factors in translation. Some translators lack culture awareness while some others overweight the overseas culture, thus leading to cultural default and negative influence to the healthy development of economy and society. In business English translation, cross-cultural factors should be highlighted to realize the equivalency of semantic message, stylistic message and cultural message.

(e) Some translators attach themselves in the authority to pursue the economic benefit. Some translation company overweight the voice of authority or the counterparty so that translators have to put the interests of publisher or sponsor in the first place rather than the quality and esthetics of translation.

(f) There is still large room for the improvement of business English translation teaching in colleges in China. Compared to the hungry market of language

service, the training and education of professional talents is far from satisfactory. The problems are mainly as following: a) The study of business English translation teaching started relatively late, being short of practical theories and researches. b) Business English teaching has been developed fast in the last five years but the national standard had not been established until 2016 and there is still a large space for the further construction of curriculum system. The discipline advantage is not evident yet. In 1998, the International Business English Research Committee of China was established, which marked the foundation of business English course construction. Business English was firstly approved and established as a major in the University of International Business and Economics by the Ministry of Education in China in 2007 and it has been flourishing all over China in the last ten years. There are nearly 270 colleges in China which has enrolled undergraduates in business English major in 2016. How to improve the business English teaching and construction in college effectively is one of the chief concerns for the teachers and researchers. c) Applied-type BE talents are asked for urgently, however, the traditional English teaching cannot meet the requests of the new circumstance. Most teachers for business English translation lack knowledge of newly developed technology such as the application of CAT and corpus.

Business English translation teaching differs from literal translation teaching from many aspects, requiring reforms and improvements along with the time change. The teaching and study of business English translation should be a dynamic and interdisciplinary process which takes time to improve.

(g) Most teaching focus on translation theory and skills without adequate practice. Modern means of teaching and evaluation needs to be widely applied. The study and research of business English translation are also facing many challenges in China. In China's translation field, most researches focus on literal translation and translation criticism, much less on ESP translation. As for ESP translation, the researches focus on science and technology translation while the studies on international business English translation are relatively rare.

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## SUMMARY

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The studies and practices on business English translation have been flourished in the last ten years in China under the circumstance of globalization and China's opening up to the outside world. There is a great need for high-quality translation talents in the language service market and there is still large room for the improvement of the research and practice in this field. Business English translation involves in transdisciplinary knowledge and has some new trends along with the new age of big data. The researchers and translators devoted in this field should highlight the cross-

cultural awareness and analyze the specific semantic and stylistic features in translation, together with the consideration of industry norms so as to guarantee the quality of translation. Great efforts have to be made to promote the healthy and sustainable development of translation in China and the global economy as well.

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