

Review Article

A Study on the Chinese-English Translation of the Foreign Ministry Spokespersons' Remarks under the Guidance of Skopos Theory

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Abstract: News text is a special genre, which carries information and is widely disseminated. Therefore, the accuracy of its translation to a large extent affects the views and opinions of news readers on news facts. Foreign news translation, as one of the institutional translations, has a strong political nature. Under the guidance of Skopos theory, this article analyzed the Chinese-English translation of the Foreign Ministry spokespersons' remarks, discussed translators need to consider language phenomena, grammatical structure and other factors from the perspective of Skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule when translating, summarized the corresponding translation strategies and methods and proved the reliability and practicability of its theoretical application. It is expected to expand the theoretical application scope of Skopos theory, establish the translation concept of taking translation purpose as the center in foreign news translation, and provide reference for foreign news translation in the future.

Keywords: Skopos theory, foreign news translation, translation strategies and methods.

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INTRODUCTION

With the high popularity of the Internet, the ways and channels of news dissemination by various media are becoming more and more diversified, and people can easily access information from all directions. The remarks of the Foreign Ministry spokespersons are the "bridge" between China and other countries in the world. The Foreign Ministry spokespersons should not only respond to the questions of media reporters on China's related affairs, dispel various international doubts and puzzles about China, but also clearly express China's positions and propositions. Therefore, the accuracy of the Foreign Ministry spokespersons' remarks translation is directly related to the international community's view of China. These require that when translating, translators should be guided by the target language and fully understand the audience, so as to fully express China's positions and opinions and establish a positive image of the China's government. In recent years, Skopos theory mainly focuses on the translation of literature, tourist attractions and advertising language, but ignoring the translation of foreign news. News translation has made great progress in both ontology research and the research on the relationship between news translation and the outside world. The research topics are more broad and diverse, but the systematicness and

innovation of the research still need to be further improved [1].

Skopos theory emphasizes that the translation should choose the best processing method for the purpose of the expected function of the translation based on the analysis of the original text. That is, translators must be able to choose specific translation methods or strategies for specific translation purposes [2]. Starting from the Skopos theory and taking the English translation version of the Foreign Ministry spokespersons' remarks on the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an example, this paper analyzes how the translation of the Foreign Ministry spokespersons' remarks clearly conveys China's position and proposition to the audience, so as to further explore the guiding role of Skopos theory in the English translation of the spokespersons' regular press conference, and summarize its translation strategies and methods.

FOREIGN NEWS TRANSLATION

To a large extent, the research on foreign news translation is to study the remarks of news translation. The remarks of foreign news reports implemented by foreign-related media such as The People's Daily, the outer net of Xinhua News Agency and the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are generally

based on the corresponding Chinese manuscript, followed by certain rules and procedures (such as material selection, translation, editing, review, finalization), then the foreign language texts are generated, rather than the texts translated by one or more people outside the organization. In other words, news translation is an institutional translation [3]. Baker & Salanha [4] believes that institutional translation refers to “translation behavior in or for a specific organization”. The purpose of institutional translation is often to realize and promote internal strengthening ideology, enhancing cultural soft power, shaping national image, shaping international image and communicating international exchanges and has internal attributes such as spontaneity, autonomy and self-interest [5]. It can be seen that foreign news translation is not a simple transformation between languages. It is based on institutions and has a strong political nature. Moreover, the translator purposefully and selectively exports a country’s political positions, views and excellent culture on the basis of the principles of coherence rule and fidelity rule, so as to achieve his country’s political goal.

SKOPOS THEORY

Skopos theory, which is developed on the basis of German functionalist translation theory, is the most important theory in functionalist translation theory. In 1996, Vermeer [6] put forward Skopos theory, whose core concept is that the most important factor in the translation process is the purpose of the overall translation behavior. “Skopos” refers to the communicative purpose of the translation, that is, “the communicative function of the translation to the target language readers in the social and cultural context of the target language [7].” There are three rules in Skopos theory: Skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule. These three rules constitute the basic principles of Skopos theory, but coherence rule and fidelity rule must subordinate to Skopos rule, which is the primary rule of Skopos theory. Skopos theory holds that translation is a kind of cross-cultural communication and is examined in a grand cultural environment. The purpose of translation is the reader’s receptive ability, so whether the receiver can agree or not determines whether the translation activity is meaningful. According to different translation purposes, translators should adopt flexible translation strategies based on the cultural background of the target group, expectations and communication needs of the translation, and specific analysis of the specific circumstances [8].

ANALYSIS OF THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSONS’ REMARKS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SKOPOS THEORY

In the translation of foreign news, because of the particularity of the news text, the political purpose is more prominent. The English transcripts of the Foreign Ministry spokespersons’ remarks are translated on the

basis of the Chinese transcripts, which belongs to institutional translation and most of its audience are from the international community. This section uses specific examples and analyzes the application of Skopos theory in the translation of the Foreign Ministry spokespersons’ remarks on the basis of the Skopos rule, fidelity rule and coherence rule, and summarizes the foreign news translation methods and strategies.

(1) Skopos Rule

The Skopos rule is the primary principle of Skopos theory. It contains three basic assumptions: first, the act of translation is determined by the purpose of translation; second, the purpose of translation changes with the recipients of the target language text; third, the conceptual boundaries of translation itself have shifted from clarity to blurring [9].

Example 1

The original text : 伤心的又何止太平洋啊? ! 美国推卸环保责任、破坏全球生态环境的劣迹不胜枚举(October 14, 2020)。

English Translation : Sadly, the “poisoning” does not stop in the Pacific. Examples abound in how the United States shirks its responsibility for environmental protection and destroys the global ecological environment (October 14, 2020).

A reporter asked that the new book *Poisoning the Pacific* published by British journalist Mitchell disclosed that American military has created serious pollution in the Pacific Islands for decades. The pollution sources include chemical weapons such as radioactive waste, nerve agent and orange agent. And the reporter asked for China’s comments on this. The Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian first stated the fact that the skin of American soldier in Guam became inflamed after executing the order to spray orange agent. Later, the soldier suffered from Parkinson’s syndrome and ischemic heart disease, and his daughter also suffered from cancer. Then the Foreign Ministry spokesperson said, “Sadly, the “poisoning” does not stop in the Pacific!?” He also listed the damage caused by the United States to the global environment. In the remarks of example 1, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson personified the Pacific Ocean, which gave inanimate things the emotional color of “sadness”. However, the translators adopt free translation for the Foreign Ministry spokesperson’s remarks here. American translation theorist Venuti also takes the translation strategy, free translation, as foreignizing translation. Free translation refers to translating according to the main idea of the original text, not word by word [7]. It is usually used more in translating sentences, phrases or larger sense groups. It is mainly applied when the source language and the target language reflect great cultural differences.

In the remarks of example 1, according to the Skopos rule of Skopos theory, that is, the translation behavior is determined by the translation purpose, and the translation purpose changes with the change of the recipient of the target language, so the translators didn't translate the exclamatory sentence word by word, but translated as "Sadly, the "poisoning" does not stop in the Pacific." First, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson's remarks "伤心的又何止是太平洋啊?!" are quoted from Chinese song *Sad Pacific*. If the translators translate it directly, it makes audience unable to understand the views expressed by the Foreign Ministry spokesperson. Second, the translators use the word "poisoning" corresponding to the "poisoning the Pacific" asked by the reporter, and objectively reveals the Foreign Ministry spokesperson's fact denouncing the harm caused by the United States to the global environment.

Example 2

The original text : 这么多天过去了, 美方还有人在叫嚣, 让中国为美国疫情负责, 他们难道不心虚、不愧疚吗? 这些人试图制造一只世界上最大的锅甩给中国, 让中国成为最大的替罪羊。但是, 这个锅太大了, 对不起, 他们甩不出去的(March 31, 2020)。

English translation: Now so many days have passed, and some in the US still claim China should be held responsible for the COVID-19 in the US. Don't they feel guilty or ashamed? They are trying to shift the biggest blame of the century to China and make it the biggest scapegoat. However, such an attempt is just impossible as the blame is too heavy to be shifted. Sorry, it won't work (March 31, 2020).

Similarly, the Skopos rule of Skopos theory can also be seen in the "domineering response" of the Foreign Ministry spokesmen. In March 2020, due to poor controllability and rapid spread, COVID-19 quickly became a global pandemic. It is urgent to prevent and control the epidemic. However, at this critical juncture, the United States has ulterior motives and fabricated false facts in an attempt to discredit China. The Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying spoke out sternly from a sense of justice and asked in replay: "and some in the US still claim China should be held responsible for the COVID-19 in the US. Don't they feel guilty or ashamed?", which seriously state China's position, that is, China should not be responsible for American epidemic. This is not in line with the basic international norms, runs counter to the humanitarian spirit, and should be strongly condemned.

In the remarks of example 2, since most of the target people are from the international community, in order to make the target language people better understand the views and positions of the foreign Ministry spokesperson, the translators also adopt the

Skopos rule of Skopos theory. Therefore, the Chinese network catchphrase "甩锅" is translated as "the biggest blame of the century" based on its meaning of "passing the buck."

In fact, in the foreign news translation, the translators adopt the Skopos rule of Skopos theory, which has achieved the effect of simplifying to a certain extent. Because of the huge cultural differences between the source language and the target language, it is easy to make the translation to be too complex. It is not a problem in the translation of literature and other styles, but news genre requires short and concise content, and its translation should be consistent with it. At this time, foreign news translation should change with the change of the recipient of the target language, so as to better achieve the effect of news reporting.

(2) Coherence Rule

Coherence rule means that the translation must meet the standard of intra-textual coherence, that is, the translation is readable and acceptable, and can make the recipient understand and have meaning in the target language culture and the communicative context in which the translation is used.

Example 3

The original text : 一段时间以来, 蓬佩奥国务卿的确很好地在践行他在德克萨斯大学演讲那句著名的“我们撒谎、我们欺骗、我们偷窃”, 他是个很好的案例。在网络安全问题上, 他每天都在撒谎。且不说大家都想不明白 TikTok 这样一个年轻人喜欢的社交媒体软件、那些轻松地跳舞、唱歌的视频怎么会对美国国家安全构成威胁? 看看美国, 在他满世界强调要提防所谓“中国威胁”、提防中国窃取用户数据这一问题上, 美国人自己是怎么做的呢(September 1, 2020)?

English Translation : Secretary of State Pompeo has indeed been practicing his own words "we lie, we cheat, we steal", which he blatantly said at a university in Texas. And he's a perfect example. He lies every day on issues of national security. How could TikTok, a social media app for young people to share light-hearted videos like singing and dancing, pose national security threats to the US? Pompeo has been playing up his "China threat" theory around the world, urging others to guard against China "stealing user data". But what about the track record of the US in this regard (September 1, 2020)?

In remarks of example 3, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying expressed her position on the view of U.S. Secretary of State Pompeo that TikTok poses a security threat to the United States. That is, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson thought it is ridiculous that TikTok can be a threat to America. And then the Foreign Ministry spokesperson listed facts to prove that U.S. Secretary of State Pompeo is an out and out cyber

liar, lying everywhere, deliberately discrediting China and causing negative impact.

Nida, a translation theorist, mentioned in his book (1982) *Translating Meaning* that “as far as Chinese and English are concerned, the most important difference in linguistics is the comparison of parataxis and hypotaxis” [10]. English attaches importance to parataxis, while Chinese attaches importance to hypotaxis. Hypotaxis uses syntactic devices or lexical devices to realize the internal connection or the connection between sentences; parataxis uses semantic connection to realize the internal connection or the connection between sentences. In the remarks of example 3, the original news are four sentences, concise and comprehensive, and there are few conjunctions. Compared with the English translation, it can be found that the translation is composed of five sentences, and there are logical connectors such as “which”, “and”, “but”, which are used to realize the connection between sentences. In addition, the translators also make changes in word order and syntax, shifts the focus and reconstructs sentence patterns. The sentence “在网络安全问题上，他每天都在撒谎” is translated into “He lies every day on issues of national security.” This sentence takes “he lies every day” as the center of the sentence and put it at the beginning of the sentence, highlighting the key points to be expressed by the Foreign Ministry spokesperson. This sentence pattern is more in line with the English expression of the target language.

In foreign news translation, the coherence rule of Skopos theory lays the foundation for the whole translation behavior. Because of the differences between Chinese and English language structure and culture, translators try to adopt hypotaxis translation strategy in English translation, and adjust word order and sentence structure if necessary, so as to be more in line with the syntactic structure of the target language and more coherent and natural writing.

(3) Fidelity Rule

Fidelity rule means that there should be inter-textual coherence between the original text and the translation. This is equivalent to the so-called faithfulness to the original text in other translation theories, but the degree and form of fidelity to the original text depend on the purpose of the translation and the translator’s understanding of the original text. The fidelity rule often resorts to literal translation, and it is more often found in the fidelity of news facts.

Example 4

The original text : “投我以木桃，报之以琼瑶”。
尽管当前中国国内疫情形势依然严峻，防疫物资还不是那么充裕，但我们愿在努力抗击本国疫情的同时，进一步向日方分享信息和经验，并根据日方需

要，继续向日方提供力所能及的支持和帮助 (February 21, 2020)。

English Translation : To quote a line from the Book of Songs, "You throw a peach to me; I give you a white jade for friendship". Though we are still facing a severe situation at home with rather tight medical supplies, we will further share information and experience with Japan and offer as much support and assistance as possible based on its need (February 21, 2020).

COVID-19 was very aggressive in the early days of China’s outbreak. China’s epidemic prevention materials were once very scarce. Japan sent a new batch of medical protection aid materials to Wuhan, China. China was most grateful, and donated a number of COVID-19 nucleic acid test kits to the Japan’s National Institute of Infectious Diseases. A reporter asked the Foreign Ministry spokesperson how to view the interaction between China and Japan in combating the epidemic. The Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang quoted from *Book of Songs* “You throw a peach to me; I give you a white jade for friendship” to respond to the interaction between China and Japan in combating the epidemic situation.

In the remarks of example 4, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson quoted scriptures and used allusions in China’s excellent traditional culture to respond to the interaction between China and Japan in combating the epidemic. Guided by the fidelity rule of Skopos theory, the translators did not translate these two poems as “one’s own kind return to others”, but directly quoted a line from the *Book of Songs*, “You throw a peach to me; I give you a white jade for friendship.” Firstly, on the basis of clearly expressing the meaning of the original text, translators directly translate the original text. Only when the original text is obscure and difficult to understand, the readability is poor, or it is difficult for the general public to understand common sense, can translators resort to literal translation. Secondly, in the remarks of example 4, the literal translation, that is, word to word translation is a translation strategy to maintain both the content and form of the original text, which can well convey the news itself. Finally, the literal translation of the quoted scriptures by the Foreign Ministry spokesperson is also the dissemination of the excellent Chinese culture which has been passed down from ancient times to the present for thousands of years.

CONCLUSION

Under the guidance of Skopos theory, this paper analyzes the English translation of the Foreign Ministry spokespersons’ remarks, and summarizes practical translation strategies and methods from the perspective of skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule. As foreign news translation, the Foreign Ministry

spokespersons' remarks has a strong purpose. When translating, the translators should grasp the political depth, flexibly use the translation strategies and methods such as literal translation, free translation, and do a good job in the external dissemination of excellent culture when correctly conveying China's positions and views. And the translators should also ensure the smooth progress of foreign publicity activities and make continuous efforts for China to establish a positive image of a big country in the world.

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