

Review Article

On Chinese Translation of English Political News Guided By Functional Translation Theory

Weixuan Shi¹ and Wenqian Li^{*2}

¹Professor in School of Foreign Languages, North China Electric Power University, NO 689 Road, North District, Baoding, Hebei, China

²Graduate Student in School of Foreign Languages, North China Electric Power University, NO 689 Road, North District, Baoding, Hebei, China

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Abstract: As a special style under the news genre, political news refers to momentous events in the country or other countries that concern the vital political interests of the country and the people. The quality of its translation straightforwardly influences international information exchange, language communication and cultural exchange. From the perspective of functional translation theory, selecting news samples from Washington Post, South China Morning Post, and China daily, this article attempts to analyze Chinese translation of English political news and proposes translation strategies that translators need to pay attention to. What's more, this article discusses the guidance of functional translation theory in political news translation and confirms the rationality and practicability of this theory, with a view to establishing a translation concept centering on audience and focusing on the effects of news transmission, thus providing some ideas for future political news translation practice.

Keywords: Functional translation theory, English political news, News translation.

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INTRODUCTION

With the continuous development of information industry and economic globalization, we cope with news translation almost every day. Most of the foreign affairs reports in the newspapers, televisions, and Internet media that we are in contact with are compiled and translated by foreign news agencies. Inevitably, the informative function and linguistic style of news play a more and more important role in human life. Beyond that, international information exchange, language communication and cultural exchange are considerably and directly influenced by the quality of news translation. Therefore, this phenomenon determines the significance of research and translation of news.

For a long time, however, news translation has not received sufficient attention. According to preliminary statistics, there are few teaching materials dedicated to news translation, even though more and more domestic colleges and universities' news departments have begun to offer news translation courses. Even in translation courses for English majors, news translation as a special style of translation is often carelessly glossed over or not involved at all, and the research on news translation has received less attention

than literary translation. Despite research monographs and theses in this category (Xu Quan, Wang Ting, 2001; Chen Yi, 2007; Zhang Shenxiang, 2008; Zhang Jian, 2013; Chen Shupe, 2014) showing an upward trend in recent years, the content of research is not detailed enough, merely focusing on news itself and relatively few studies using translation theory for specific news styles (Liu Xiaoyan, 2017).

This article attempts to analyze the Chinese translation of English political news with the guidance of functional translation theory, emphasize the communicative intention and communicative function of news translation, explore its impact on the translation of political news from the perspective of functional translation theory, and propose specific translation strategies based on instances. Most importantly, it investigates the role of functional translation theory in stylistic translation of news, thereby testifying the validity and practicability of the theory.

POLITICAL NEWS

Definition and Characteristics

Political news is the activity of journalists as political communicators to report and comment on the recent political facts to the public through a certain

medium (Li Liangrong, 2001). Political news belongs to a special style under the news genre, which focuses on important events in the country or other countries that are related to the vital political and economic interests of the country and the people, such as changes in heads of state and government leaders, policy releases, government statements, political negotiations or meetings, etc., featuring in authenticity, time-efficiency and seriousness. Authenticity requires that political news must be completely true. Truth is the life of news, which is a universally accepted standard for journalists (Zhang Yongwei, 2012). Time-efficiency requires that political news be made public at the first time. Seriousness means that political news must be accurate and rigorous, cannot be fabricated and assumed in the slightest.

Functionally, political journalism is an informational text within the category of referential text (Yu Fuqing, 2010), the purpose of which is to accurately and objectively convey information so that the public keeps up to date with the latest political events and the government's newly issued guidelines. From the perspective of language use, political news has the characteristics of sophisticated and concise words, precise sentence structure, and solemn style.

TRANSLATION CHARACTERISTICS

The Translation Of Political News Is Tendentious

The information contained in the translation of political news is both objective and subjective (Liu Huani, 2007). There is often a tendency in subjective information, and objective information may also carry subjective factors and therefore reflect the tendency of political news translation. This tendency is often regulated by the governing class to serve its own interests; in turn, the ideology of governing class can render purposefulness in political news translation (Yan Ni, 2018). The translator can influence the translation behavior by deciding the purpose of translation. In order to avoid deviating from the purpose of translation, the translator can only manipulate his limited voice and translation skills to the extent permitted. Therefore, the ideological factors related to the translator will have an impact on the translation effect that the translator ultimately achieves, making translation to a certain extent serve the politics (Zhu Juntao, 2018). In view of this, when translating works of political news, the translator should correctly understand the specific purpose that the translation is expected to achieve, and repeatedly consider the appropriateness of the translation from the perspective of political influence.

Appropriate Additions And Subtractions May Be Made In The Translation Of Political News.

The purpose of political news translation is to make secondary transmission of the news in source language smoothly, and the difference between the news of target audience and the source audience is also

inevitable (Cheng Ying, 2011). In translation process, it is necessary and mandatory for translators to make appropriate additions and subtractions to the text, and even provide background information or annotations that are not included in the news of source language, and help the target language readers understand the news information in a way that conforms to the target language reader's habits (Guo Yingzhen, 2011). Of course, translators must follow certain principles to avoid arbitrary additions and subtractions of the source text, resulting in lack of translation content and unclear subject.

Political news translation is an important source and dissemination approach of international news and its importance is self-evident. In view of the characteristics of political news translation, translators do not have to be constrained by the original language form in translation. They should strive to embed the translation into the cultural factors and atmosphere of the target language, and accurately express the original information according to the target reader's understanding and make it readily accepted by target readers.

FUNCTIONAL TRANSLATION THEORY

Functional translation theory was born in Germany in the 1970s. In 1971, Reiss initially listed text function as a criterion of translation criticism in the book *Possibility and Limitation of Translation Criticism*, and proposed that "the special purpose to be achieved by translation" was a new form of translation criticism. That is, the translation is evaluated from the relationship between the functions of the source text and the target text, and the prototype of functional translation theory has been established thereby.

Afterwards, her student Vermeer (1996) put forward Skopos Theory on the basis of Reiss' theory, emphasizing translation methods and strategies must be determined by the intended purpose or function of the translation. There are three crucial principles in "Skopos Theory", namely, Skopos rule, coherence rule, and fidelity rule. The Skopos rule is the first and prime principle of Skopos Theory, and the others are subsidiary principles under the Skopos rule. In accordance with the Skopos rule, translation standards no longer rest on word-for-word correspondence but the appropriateness based on the translation purpose. The coherence rule refers to intratextual coherence, which means that the translation should be meaningful in the target culture and communicative context, stressing the target culture and communicative context. The fidelity rule, also known as intertextual coherence, refers to a relationship between the original text and the translation text.

In 1997, Christie Nord authored a book called *Translating as a purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained*, which systematically summarized the functional translation theory, and then extended the theory on this basis, and proposed the principle of fidelity in the translation process. Nord emphasized that the principle of fidelity was different from the loyalty of “equality theory”. Loyalty refers to the equivalence of the original and the translation, while fidelity refers to the multilateral relationship between the original author, the translator, and the target reader. The principle of fidelity strives to achieve consistency in these relationships. In this book, she also presented two translation strategies: “documentary translation” and “instrumental translation”. “Documentary translation” means using the target language to reproduce the communication context between the original author and the reader, including the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the original. “Instrumental translation” regards translation as a tool for communication between the original author and target readers, transferring the content of the original communication according to the needs of target readers.

From a brand-new perspective, functional translation theory interprets translation and guides the way to translate. Placing “the purpose of translation” as the core, the theory takes into account the multilateral relationship between the original author, the translator, and the target reader. It instructs translators to begin with the purpose of translation, instead of considering free translation (domestication) or literal translation (foreignization) as traditionally does.

ANALYSIS OF FUNCTIONAL TRANSLATION THEORY IN CHINESE TRANSLATION OF ENGLISH POLITICAL NEWS

When translating English political news, the translator determines the communicative purpose of the translation in line with the requirements of functional translation theory, and chooses the appropriate translation method according to the content of text and language characteristics. Through specific examples, this part expounds the translation strategies of English political news guided by functional translation theory from the headline (lexicon), syntax and discourse level.

Headline

Containing a wealth of information, the news headline is a relatively important portion of news on account of its conciseness. Most readers hope to obtain the maximum amount of information in the shortest time, which also strengthens the importance of political news headlines. Therefore, we must attach great importance to the translation of English political news headlines. The vocabulary of headlines in political news

is unique, featuring in concise and vivid description. News translators should carefully translate the headline under the guidance of functional translation theory, and strive for accurate and reasonable translation.

Example 1

Nixon Went to China, Trump Went for ‘Amnesty’ (From the Washington Post, June 18th, 2018)

Translation: 尼克松能访华，特朗普就能“大赦”(https://techcrunch.com/)

On May 11, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Department arrested an immigrant in California. After the incident, the reporter expressed his opinion towards Trump’s immigration policy in this news by comparing the anti-Cold War activist President Richard Nixon with the typical anti-immigrant xenophobia Trump who vowed to implement mass expulsion. The term “Amnesty” is used in the headline to briefly deliver an official government order that allows the release of a particular prisoner. The reporter also hopes that President Trump will pardon immigrants one day. Therefore, from the perspective of functional translation theory, the main purpose of translation is to express the reporter’s attitude towards the current situation of American immigrants and his suggestions to President Trump. In view of the similar meaning of “Amnesty” and “大赦” in the source and target cultures, the headline can be directly translated as “尼克松能访华，特朗普就能‘大赦’” with the quotation mark to succinctly convey the implication of the title.

The most obvious feature of literal translation is one-to-one. This simple correspondence is completely based on the source text, and it is directly converted without processing. This requires translators to have a solid foundation of language, be able to grasp the conceptual contents of the original text, retain as many rhetorical techniques and sentence structures as possible, and then transform them into the target text. If the meaning embodied in the source language can be completely found in the target language, the translator can obtain the same linguistic effect through literal translation, achieving functions and purposes of news, which is in line with the requirements of fidelity rule and functional theory.

Example 2

At only 20, Hong Kong under Chinese rule is still trying to find its feet (From South China Morning Post. June 22th, 2017)

Translation: 回归二十年，香港还在适应政治新环境 (www.politico.com)

This news report is mainly about Hong Kong's achievements after adopting the "one country, two systems" policy accompanied by its return to the motherland, and it highlights that Hong Kong still confronts novel ideas and a new environment in the political field. "Find its feet" is the core of a news headline, whereas translating it into "蹒跚学步" cannot express the whole meaning, which needs more specific explanation. From the view of functional translation theory, the purpose of the source text is to make the readers of the target culture aware that after the return of Hong Kong in 1997, Hong Kong is still adapting to the new political environment. Accordingly, it is necessary to narrow the scope to the political field in translation so that readers can better understand the reporter's intention. This method of translation is named free translation.

Literal translation and free translation are both traditional translation methods, which can sometimes be used independently, and sometimes combined with other translation methods. Free translation refers to non-word-by-word translation based on the meaning of the original text, without contrasting the original sentence structure (Tan Weiguo, Cai Longquan, 2011). Translators can resort to free translation only when the literal translation method is not feasible. Whichever approach is taken, it should be based on the purpose of original news.

Syntax

The translation of news headlines is mainly concerning lexical translation. Compared with lexicon, syntax is a more complicated level. This section analyzes the strategies and techniques used in Chinese translation of English political news fastened on sentences from the perspective of functional translation theory. Functional translation theory emphasizes that in order to achieve the purpose and communicative function of the translation, to better retain the original information, it is necessary to break the language form of the original and restructure it.

Example 3

That was also the message in a June 28 letter to US President Donald Trump signed by six veteran former US officials such as former defense secretary William Perry, former secretary of state George Shultz, and Robert Gallucci and Bill Richardson, both of whom participated in previous talks with the DPRK. (From "US Should Throw Its Weight Behind Inter-Korean talks", chinadaily.com.cn, July 21st, 2017)

Translation: 前国防部长威廉·佩里(William Perry, 音)、前国务卿乔治·舒尔茨(George Shultz, 音)和罗伯特·加路奇(Robert Gallucci, 音)及比尔·理查森(Bill Richardson 音)等六位曾参加过朝鲜对话的

资深老将于 6 月 28 日给唐纳德·特朗普联名上书, 信中也传递了相同的信息。
(<http://cn.chinadaily.com.cn/>)

The main point of this news is that neither the United States nor South Korea should shy away from bilateral talks with North Korea, lest South Korea and Japan could be possibly affected by North Korea's response to the US attack. The selected sentences focus on the attitudes of six former senior U.S. officials who tried to persuade Trump to use negotiations as a solution.

Lian Shuneng (1993) believes that English focuses on syntactic structure and strict sentence structure, with phrases and clauses centering on subject and predicate verbs. Conversely, Chinese emphasizes semantic structure, with sentence structure centering on verbs. It expands horizontally in chronological order and advances layer by layer to form a "flowing" sentence structure (Meng Qingsheng, 2017)

In light of the emphasis on semantics in Chinese, the subject should be chosen on the basis of understanding the meaning of the original text; in addition, it is supposed to be consistent with the prominent information in the sentence, the logical relationship in the sentence, and the need for coherent writing. It appears that the sentence structure of this example is very simple. However, if it is literally translated and the "message in the letter" in the original sentence is used as the subject, the translation will seem stiff and the sentence structure will be unbalanced. From the perspective of functional translation, the reporter intends to emphasize the attitudes of six former senior US officials, so it is necessary to adjust the word order of the translation and rewrite it appropriately. Placing the six officials at the beginning of the sentence as the subject matches the expressions in Chinese, which accords with the coherence rule and fidelity rule as well.

Example 4

With the concerns about protectionism policies- like those implemented by the US President Donald Trump-growing by China, the British market can prove an easy prey for the Chinese goods. (From "China&Britain: From Feud to Friendship", chinadaily.com.cn, July 24th, 2017)

Translation: 美国总统唐纳德·特朗普实施贸易保护主义政策, 中国对此表示担忧, 英国市场可以借此证明中国商品可以在英国拥有广阔市场。
(<http://cn.chinadaily.com.cn/>)

This news reviews the history of Sino-British relations, explains the changes in Sino-British relations, and analyzes a range of potential areas for bilateral cooperation after Brexit. This sentence is selected from the paragraph describing the expansion of bilateral trade relations. Brexit provides a new opportunity for the UK and greatly promotes bilateral trade agreements with China.

Hence, what this example reflects is that Britain's attitude towards trade cooperation is adverse to the protectionist policies implemented by US President Donald Trump. The "prove an easy prey for" in the sentence is pretty crucial but difficult to translate.

By no means can translating it literally as "盘中餐" express the reporter's attitude, and it cannot reveal the improvement and change in relations between the two countries. As a consequence, under the guidance of functional translation theory, the main purpose of this sentence is to prove that Sino-British relations are undergoing a transformation, which provides opportunities and markets for both countries. By virtue of domestication method, the translation version "证明.....拥有广阔市场" solves this problem to some extent and realizes the language function.

Discourse

News aims to convey information with concise expressions. This section mainly discusses the role of functional translation theory in political news translation at a higher level—discourse. The selected paragraphs in this section are mainly composed of two or more compound or complex sentences.

Example 5

The gaffe-prone Inada, who is Abe's protege, has been heavily criticized by the opposition for, among other scandals, covering up the data of Japan's Self-Defense Forces peace keeping operation in South Sudan. Actually, the opposition camp demands her immediate resignation. And Kaneda triggered a storm by refusing to provide a good enough explanation for the ominous anti-conspiracy bill, which was railroaded through the parliament. (From "Abe's Maneuverings for Constitutional Revision May Yet Fail", chinadaily.com.cn, July 10th, 2019)

Translation: 安倍的得意门生, 稻田朋美频频失言, 其诸多丑闻中隐藏日本南苏丹维和自卫队数据一事受到在野党严厉指责。实际上, 反对阵营要求她立即辞职。而金田胜年强使国会草率通过“反阴谋法案”, 却拒绝给出合理解释, 引发了“血雨腥风”, 这给安倍的政治前景带来不祥之兆。
(<http://cn.chinadaily.com.cn/>)

In this news, the reporter analyzes the political situation in Japan at that time. Abe intended to strengthen his competitiveness towards his party's highest position in a variety of ways, thereby consolidating his power within the party, including promoting the drafting of a revised constitution and reorganizing the cabinet. This paragraph explains why it is possible for Abe to abandon Secretary of Defense Inada.

The main purpose of the original paragraph is to inform readers that Inada is currently being criticized in Japan, which exerts a great negative impact on Shinzo Abe. Literal translation is a commonly used translation strategy for English political news, because the language of it is simple and distinct, with the purpose to objectively convey information. Except for the last sentence, this paragraph uses the strategy of literal translation. The core of the last sentence is the word "ominous", which fully reflects the reporter's political attitude. Employing the literal translation to modify the "anti-conspiracy bill" obviously does not show the author's intention and highlight the political influence on Abe. Based on functional translation theory and fidelity rule in particular, when literal translation cannot achieve the function of the original text, the word order should be adjusted to make the translated text more acceptable and more logical. This translation method is called domestication. At the same time, when translating political news, it is necessary to explain the political background clearly, and add relevant information to make the translation smoother. Therefore, the translation of "ominous" into "这给安倍的政治前景带来不祥之兆" is the result of methods of addition and domestication.

Example 6

The G20 summit last month in Hamburg, which was in large measure about this most pressing issue of our time, marked a watershed moment when President Donald Trump abdicated the position of the US as the spearhead of the global movement to address climate change. China and Europe are now looking to fill the vacuum and lead the rest of the member-states to meet their targets of sustainable development-powered largely by clean energy. India should stand with them. (From "India Can Beat China to Lead in This Area", chinadaily.com.cn, Aug. 7th, 2017)

译文: 上月举行的汉堡 G20 峰会上, 唐纳德·特朗普总统公开放弃了美国在应对气候变化这项全球运动的领导地位, 这让本次会议成为气候变化这一紧迫议题的分水岭。现在, 中国和欧洲正在寻找国家填补空缺, 以领导其余成员国完成可持续发展的目标, 即主要使用清洁能源提供动力。印度应当

与 中 国 和 欧 洲 并 肩 作 战 。
(<http://cn.chinadaily.com.cn/>)

This news mainly illustrates the stance of the reporter, namely, India should fight alongside China and Europe to cope with climate change. This paragraph consists of two complex sentences. In order to maintain coherence and keep consistent with Chinese expression habits, the order of words in the translated text need to be adjusted. Andre Lefevere (1992) summarizes translation as a form of rewriting, oriented by a series of ideology and political constraints in the target language and cultural system, so that the translated text can play a role. Consequently, a domestication translation method requires to put time and place first, followed by the main characters, actions, and results.

The description of the G20 summit “which was in large measure about this most pressing issue of our time” adopts an subtraction translation method to translate it into “紧迫议题”, rather than verbatim translation. Owing to the author’s purpose lying in the sentence of the paragraph “India should stand with them”, the other parts of the sentence can be reduced appropriately. In addition, the last sentence “India should stand with them” translates the pronoun “them” to “中国和欧洲”, emphasizing the importance of India, China and Europe fighting side by side, in line with functional translation theory. Therefore, under the guidance of functional translation theory, this paragraph of news uses three translation methods: domestication, addition and subtraction.

In short, the application of functional translation theory has strong guiding significance for the translation strategy of news text for the sake of its purpose of information transmission. From a macro perspective, it combines translation and the communicative functions of language to guide the direction of news translation. From a micro perspective, it has strong practicality and operability, enabling translators to be “well-founded” in the translation process and facilitating the implementation of different translation strategies. In other words, its guiding significance to news translation cannot be ignored, and it also has important implications for our bilingual translation practice.

Therefore, translators can use functional translation theory as a guide to consider how to organize translations from multiple perspectives such as lexicon, sentence structure, and discourse content, and accurately master the deep meaning of political speech to ensure that the translation not only can fully reflect the purpose of the source language, but also be faithful to the intention of author.

CONCLUSION

Based on the functional translation theory, this article discusses the linguistic features, translation characteristics of political news, and the important role of this theory in political news translation. Under the guidance of theories, specific and practical translation methods are proposed from various aspects, such as lexicon, syntax, and discourse.

It can be found that the functional translation theory regards the original text as only one of the various types of information applied by the translator. There is no doubt that this theory gets rid of the restriction that translators conceive the original text as the center, and set the translation absolutely equivalent to the original as the standard. It also emphasizes the role of translation context and readers in translation, which can effectively enhance the practicability and operability of news translation practice.

Not only should a political news translator master the basic characteristics of news translation, but also correctly evaluate the acceptability of news readers, acquire some translation skills including domestication, foreignization, addition, subtraction, etc., and be able to apply these skills on appropriate occasions, thus ensuring the smooth progress of foreign publicity activities.

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