

An Analysis of Translation Strategies Used in External Publicity News from China Daily Based on Functional Equivalence Theory

Junyu Zou^{1,a,*}

¹*Tan Kah Kee College, Xiamen University, Zhangzhou City, Fujian Province, 363123, China*

a. eng20082@stu.xujc.com

**corresponding author*

Abstract: As one of China's most influential news media, China Daily is also an important window for people worldwide to know about the country. This research aims to select four news reports from China Daily and their corresponding English translations, all of which are economic topics, to compare the Chinese and English discourses. At the same time, the research analyzes the translation strategies used during the translation process based on Eugene Nida's functional equivalence translation theory, analyzes the logical differences between Chinese and English languages and corresponding solution strategies, and summarizes the strategies for external news translation. In so doing, the results can better guide the practice of external publicity translation. Research has found that in bilingual news translation, retranslation, including addition, subtraction, and part-of-speech conversion, are commonly used as translation strategies. These strategies ensure that the translator can give full play to his subjective initiative in the translation process and is not limited to the original text. Considering things from the perspective of the target language readers, the translator can also make the translation more in line with the expression habits of the target language. Meanwhile, the translator cannot blindly adapt to the readers and thus damage the information of the original text.

Keywords: functional equivalence, External publicity translation, Translation strategy

1. Introduction

Today, as globalization accelerates, the world becomes increasingly connected, and information exchanges between countries become more frequent. The media for cross-cultural exchanges and dissemination have also been gradually improved and enriched in the process of globalization, hence the emergence of various forms of communication. A wide range of communication methods, including the Internet, film and television works, literary works, and more, and news reporting is also an important part of it such as external propaganda news. With new development challenges, foreign propaganda tries to start from the cultural environment of the target language to build a multi-dimensional ecological context that is consistent with the target language and make multi-dimensional adaptation and adaptability choices such as language level, communicative level, and cultural level, so that external propaganda news reports can be accurately conveyed and enjoyed by foreign audiences [1]. In this context, novel prerequisites emerge for external news dissemination in

order to genuinely fulfill the objectives of publicizing information. If foreign propaganda news wants to break language communication barriers and promote Chinese voices to the world, translation accuracy and translation quality play a vital role. Based on this, the research chooses the bilingual news in China Daily as the corpus source. As an official media, China Daily provides an authoritative corpus. It studies the translation strategies adopted in the translation process of bilingual news and explores its processing from the functional equivalence translation theory perspective. When there are language differences between Chinese and English, how to achieve functional equivalence can be summarized as a bilingual news translation strategy, providing guidance and reference for the practical work of external publicity news translation. At the same time, Chinese and English bilingual parallel texts are compared as research methods. There are two different definitions of “parallel text” in the translation community. In the realm of corpus translation studies, the term “parallel text” encompasses a corpus comprising the original text and its corresponding translation. Conversely, an alternative definition of “parallel text” characterizes them as linguistically distinct entities. These are independent texts, yet they arise within analogous or parallel conditions. Within the domains of translation studies and lexicography, “parallel texts” serve as a valuable tool for scrutinizing how diverse languages convey identical factual content [2].

2. Literature Review

In general, news translation research in China started relatively late, showing a research trend from a macro view to a micro one and from the overall news to local characteristics. However, so far, there is no clear methodology for the research on news translation, and most of the research methods are empirical and scattered reviews [3]. Numerous scholars contend that an underlying challenge pervades the realm of external publicity translation in China. Specifically, they assert that translators, during the translation process, inadvertently succumb to the influence of the Chinese language, thereby imparting Chinese pragmatic habits and cultural values into their translations. Many scholars have also analyzed the root causes of translation problems in external publicity from the perspective of analyzing cultural differences. Wu called the external propaganda materials that were influenced by Chinese culture and caused difficulties for target language readers to understand as “hidden injuries”. “Chinese English”, the main factor affecting the quality of external publicity translation, is also due to the translator’s intentional or unintentional transfer of Chinese language and cultural habits into the translation manuscript [4]. Cheng summarized three adverse effects of Chinese culture’s translation for external publicity: not conforming to target language habits; self-created English collocations based on Chinese rules; and personification [5]. Consequently, this infusion leads to a misalignment with the pragmatic customs of the target language. Addressing analogous concerns, certain scholars have posited that the most salient distinction between external and internal publicity resides in their divergent communication objectives. External publicity is not a replica of internal publicity, and we must pay attention to the distinction between internal and external propaganda [6]. Considering the particularity of external propaganda materials, translators should pay more attention to communication and the understanding and feelings of target language users. Therefore, external publicity translation not only pursues equivalence in language but also equivalence in semantics, cultural connotation, and other aspects. Currently, most of the research on foreign publicity translation in China focuses on exploring translation principles and improving the quality of foreign publicity translation purely from a grammatical perspective. Therefore, this research hopes to render its trifling service to studying external publicity news translation.

3. Theoretical Framework

This research uses functional equivalence theory as the theoretical framework and, from this perspective, studies the strategies of foreign news translation. “Functional equivalence” translation theory seeks to achieve equivalence in content and form between the original text information and the target text information under the guidance of the translation goal of “the response of the target text readers to the translated text and the response of the original text readers to the original text are basically the same”. The above refers to the equivalent transmission of the textual information of the translated content, and the form refers to lexical equivalence, syntactic equivalence, textual equivalence, and stylistic equivalence [7]. However, external news is not a pure news report. As a means of communication, it is not only a way of communication between countries but also a carrier of the country’s national image, ideology, etc. This topic takes the particularity of foreign news into account. During the research process, it not only explores the translation strategies of foreign news but also discusses it from the perspectives of translators and audiences, including the identity transformation of translators and readers, and analyzes more from the perspective of functional equivalence. There are many feasible translation methods, thereby reducing the limitations of the source text for the translator and more.

4. An Introduction to Characteristics of News Language

Different from general literary styles, news writing usually pays more attention to objectivity, timeliness, and accuracy. News reports focus on objective descriptions of facts with concise language and a certain degree of logic. However, at the same time, as Chinese is a semantic language, two direct components within a sentence can be combined without formal marking to indicate the nature of the relationship between them [8]. News reports usually take advantage of this feature to form many expressions with Chinese characteristics to pursue phonological beauty. Although they are catchy to read, these expressions have the characteristics of repeated semantics and mutual inclusion. The meaning is highly condensed, and the form is often greater than the meaning. As a morphological language, English pays attention to sentence structure, so its language has internal logic, and its news writing language is more concise. English users can infer the implicit attitudes behind the language through the composition of lexicon and syntax. Therefore, it is necessary to not only meet the characteristics of the news language, but also consider the language differences between Chinese and English. The multiple requirements make the external publicity translation work difficult. Translators should understand different languages’ discourse structure and organizational rules and try to achieve semantic equivalence and stylistic consistency, making it easier for the communication audience to accept [9].

This study further sorts out the language of external news publicity and finds out several special features. Especially in recent years, China has constantly put forward slogans such as “China’s economy must be confident and self-reliant.” News reports have focused on the remarkable results achieved in the economic field, especially in foreign trade. In the chosen news corpus, numerous expressions bearing distinct Chinese characteristics have surfaced, exemplified by phrases like “delegating authority, streamlining regulations, and enhancing services” and “committing investments to Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei for the pursuit of a brighter future”. These language styles can express our country’s achievements in the economic field concisely and try to increase foreign investment. Therefore, this study selects economic bilingual news as the entry point. External propaganda news discourse has its language specificity. Its purpose is to report real events, and the language strives to be popular, true, lively, and interesting. When switching to external publicity, external publicity writers start from a cross-cultural perspective, adapt to the rich context conveyed by the news, and make dynamic choices and a series of adaptive activities from the multi-dimensional

ecological context so that the news reports are both accurately conveyed and novel and concise, and better expand the dissemination coverage as well as publicity effect of the news [1].

5. Strategy

5.1. Adaption

Adaption is a relatively common translation strategy, which generally refers to the translator modifying and adjusting the source text during the translation process, including “assimilation”, “foreignization”, “additional translation”, “subtraction translation”, and more, so that the translator can avoid sticking to the word-to-word correspondence with the source text.

Example 1

Text:

“国务院周日印发了《关于进一步优化外商投资环境,加大吸引外商投资力度的意见》”

Translation: “...the State Council issued a 24-point guideline [...]”

As shown in Example 1, English users are not used to complex and repetitive concepts. The State Council of China signed the “Guideline” to achieve a certain goal. The consequences of “signing” have been clearly explained, and the role of the document has been highlighted. There is no need to reiterate it, given that the omitted material functions as the attributive for “Guideline.” Preserving it in its entirety, as per the original text, would result in excessive length, thereby undermining the straightforwardness of the news discourse and deviating from the customary practice of English users. In lieu of this, “guideline” is employed to denote the documents issued by the State Council, exemplifying a process of subtractive translation.

Example 2

Text: 北京将深入推进“放管服”改革

Translation: Beijing would deepen the streamlining of “administration, delegating powers, and improving regulation and services” reform.

In Example 2, the Chinese language shows the characteristics of high condensation. It is difficult to judge the part of speech of a character only through a single Chinese character. Chinese often need to distinguish meaning through word combinations. Although these combinations take up only a small number of characters, they can express rich expressions and meaning. In this case, the translator can use the additional translation method, that is, interpret the source text accordingly. The original text is a simple three-character one, but it requires many words to be completely translated into English. This is because the users of the two languages have different cultural backgrounds, and the language-specific expressions produced by different cultures are also different. Therefore, translators need to adjust similar expressions with Chinese characteristics and supplement the omitted information so that target language users can understand the meaning expressed in the original text.

The original text of “放,管,服”, is an abbreviation of three actions: the central government decentralizes administrative power, innovates, and strengthens regulatory functions, and reduces government intervention in the market. If the three actions of “放,管,服” are translated literally, the translated content will have nothing to do with the meaning expressed in the original text. Therefore, the use of additional translation here not only allows English users to understand the specific content of this reform and can also overcome the problem of high condensation of Chinese characters.

Chinese morphemes, predominantly monosyllabic in nature, are well-suited for encapsulating the language’s tidy structure and harmonic allure. To maintain the equilibrium of syllables in sentences

and to enhance the allure of neatness and melodic cadence, Chinese frequently employs lexical repetition [10]. Unlike Chinese, English is dominated by multi-syllable words. It is difficult to use the characteristics of phonology to create sentences in pursuit of phonological and rhythmic rhymes and counterpoints like Chinese. In other words, Chinese speakers do not use pronouns to replace the concept of repetition, and Chinese itself relies on word order and internal logic to connect.

Example 3

Text:

“工信部和国资委表示,这些材料代表新材料产业发展的方向与趋势,是构建新的增长引擎的重要切入点。”

Translation: “‘These materials represent the direction of the development of the new materials industry, which is an important entry point for building new growth engines’, the ministry and the commission said.”

In Example 3, “These materials represent...directions and trends.” In fact, “direction” and “trend” have a similar meaning. They both refer to the future development direction of the “materials industry” in the original text. There is no significant difference, but it is affected by the Chinese expression. Due to the influence of habits, Chinese users do not think there is anything wrong with this expression. Therefore, in the process of English translation, it is necessary to take the differences in logic between Chinese and English into account and retain its most basic meaning. There is no need to pursue a word-to-word correspondence between the two languages. Therefore, “direction and trend” should be translated as “direction” and a subtractive translation strategy should be adopted.

5.2. Part of Speech Conversion

Vocabulary in Chinese does not always have a counterpart in English. Overall, Chinese descriptions are more concrete, while English descriptions are more abstract; Chinese is more dynamic, while English descriptions are more static [11]. Therefore, using the strategy of part-of-speech conversion can not only naturally convert unique Chinese expressions into expressions suitable for English users, but also allows the translator to have more autonomy in the sentence structure, making the translation sentence structure more flexible.

Example 4

Text: “受全球经济复苏放缓影响,跨境投资有所下降……”

Translation: “Given the slowdown in global economic recovery and the decline in cross-border investments...”

For example, in Example 4, “recovery”, “slowdown”, and “decline” are all converted from verbs into nouns, which correspond to adverbials of cause in English. By following the original intent, this approach ensures adherence to the source text’s intended meaning without necessitating sentence repetition. It directly incorporates the main sentence to convey the emphasized event, thereby enhancing the authenticity of the translation. However, if we follow the structure of the original sentence and retain the dynamics of the three actions, we will need to add an additional subject in English and start a new sentence. The causal logic of the original sentence will not be expressed, and the translated sentence will be more complicated. More importantly, the recipient of the action affected by the slowdown in global economic recovery is “cross-border investment.” If translated literally, the subject needs to appear twice, which appears repetitive in English expressions and does not conform to the expressions of English users’ habit.

6. Suggestions

The research finds that the stylistic characteristics of foreign news are also affected by factors such as Chinese pragmatic logic, expression habits, and language characteristics. This means that in the process of foreign publicity translation, attention must be paid to the source language and the translation. The conversion of logic between input and output languages should follow the most basic translation principles. In addition, the style of foreign news cannot be completely analyzed from the perspective of language translation. The national image accompanies it and has a certain information density. Therefore, the translator needs to exert his or her own subjective initiative without damaging the source text. With the premise of containing the information, the impact of the source text on the source language users can be maximized and transferred to the target language users. Therefore, both in terms of language and functional equivalence, it poses a huge challenge to the translator. However, due to this feature, the translator can go beyond the limitations of the language itself and decode, adjust, and reconstruct the text to make it more consistent with the stylistic characteristics of foreign news and the pragmatic habits of the target language. Therefore, external publicity translation has a certain degree of flexibility.

In addition, from the media perspective, China Daily, as one of China's authoritative media, also enjoys a certain degree of popularity around the world. Therefore, reports published in this media should also be noted that there should be an official version of translation for terms and expressions with Chinese characteristics that are frequently used. This type of expression is highly concise and professional, but how they are interpreted depends on the translator during the translation process. Although they are not completely different from each other, there are still slight differences. At the same time, many expressions in Chinese sound rhythmic and rhyming, causing auditory reservations, such as various four-character patterns. However, in fact, such expressions are mostly repetitive and cumbersome. Due to the uniqueness of Chinese, Native speakers are accustomed to accepting this expression, but it does not correspond to English. In the actual translation process, whether to retain similar formats, find expressions that can also rhyme in English, or break out of the limitations of the original text and retain its basic meaning are also issues that need to be considered.

7. Conclusion

As an important means of international communication, external news aims to establish a country's image, enhance its status in the international community, let the world know itself better, and ultimately achieve the purpose of communication and exchange. Therefore, its translation is not blindly faithful to the original text, but it is more about standing from the perspective of the target language users, which not only requires maintaining the original objectivity but also conforming to the language usage habits of the target language, satisfies foreign audiences, and gets rid of the inherent thinking of the source language, but at the same time, it cannot blindly adapt readers of the target language, thereby compromising the accuracy of the source text information. Considering this premise, the translation strategies that can be adopted for external news include translation (including translation addition and subtraction) and part-of-speech conversion; at the same time, in the translation process of external news, the special functions of external news need to be taken into account, and the translation is not pursuing word-to-word equivalence with the original text but requires more functional equivalence, that is, external communication. Therefore, it can give the translator more autonomy. The selected translation strategy is no longer limited, and the translation form is more flexible and can give full play to the translator's subjective initiative. However, at the same time, due to the small base of news report corpus selected for this project, the news topics only include economics, the depth and breadth of the research have certain limitations, and the conclusions drawn do not apply to all foreign news translations. Therefore, the next research direction of this topic

will focus on exploring foreign news translation from a wider range of topics, such as ecological environment, history, and culture, etc., and increase the number of news corpus selected to make the research conclusions more comprehensive. Representative and more universal, it can truly provide sustainable guidance for external publicity translation.

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