

A Study on the English Translation of Chinese Political News from the Perspective of Skopos Theory: A Case Study of *China Daily*

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Abstract: In the new era, the translation of Chinese political news into English aims to accurately convey China's development dynamics to the global audience, further deepen the world's understanding of China, promote friendly exchanges and cooperation between China and other countries around the world, facilitate China's better access to the world, and enhance the friendship between each other. However, the translation of political news is unique and challenging because of the basic differences between Chinese and Western language structures, as well as the unique styles and profound connotations embedded in each country's political news. This paper takes Mr. Hans Vermeer's Skopos theory as guidance. It takes some political news in *China Daily* as examples to discuss the English translation techniques of political news in China nowadays. It also gives full affirmation and support to Skopos theory. Finally, through the combined application of Skopos theory with other translation techniques in translation practice, it is particularly emphasized that Chinese translators need to maintain cultural self-awareness and cultural self-confidence, and possess a deep sense of patriotic awareness. Through the flexible application of translation techniques, Chinese translators will play a greater role on the global stage and contribute to the promotion of Chinese culture and the realization of the Chinese dream.

Keywords: Skopos theory; Political news; Translation techniques; *China Daily*

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1. Introduction

The world today is facing a great change that has not been seen in a century. At present, the global development initiative and the global security initiative have strongly led the international order in the right direction; the Chinese concept and Chinese action of "the Belt and Road" construction have injected Chinese energy into global governance under the changing circumstances of the world. At the same time, with more frequent exchanges of various ideas and cultures in the world, and more intense struggles for international public opinion and soft power, the country's demand for high-quality internationalized foreign language translators with a sense of patriotism, a global vision, and the ability to tell China's story and participate in the global competition has never been as urgent as it is today. However, this process has also been accompanied by many misunderstandings of China's policies and theories, even to the extent of saying that they denigrate China. In order to provide the world with a comprehensive and accurate understanding of China, *China Daily* provides the world's political community with a standardized example of how to understand China, and Mr. Hans Vermeer's Skopos

theory is most applicable to it.

From the level of practical significance, the research of this thesis can help to improve the quality of English translation of Chinese political news and promote the exchange and mutual appreciation between Chinese culture and Western culture. From the level of social impact, high-quality English translation of political news also helps to promote understanding and cooperation among different cultures and provides strong support for the harmonious development of international relations.

2. Profile and analysis of political news

News, as a functional text, fully embodies its unique non-literary characteristics due to its clear and concise language, accurate content, and easy-to-understand expression.

2.1. Overview of political news

Political news focuses on in-depth coverage of domestic and international political affairs, providing readers with a comprehensive and in-depth view of political dynamics. Political news is rich and diverse, and can be further subdivided into two categories: official documents and political essays. They are often the focus of public attention and are closely related to national political, economic, and social development, affecting everyone's life ^[1]. Political news is released by authoritative figures and government organizations. Political news is an important way for the public to understand political developments and participate in political life, and it plays an irreplaceable role in maintaining social stability and promoting social progress.

2.2. Features of political news

As an important branch of news, political news not only retains the common characteristics of news but also shows its unique style. Firstly, political news is distinctly political. Wu claimed, in the definition of political journalism, the core term "political" specifies its essential attributes, i.e., the main content of the news must be directly or indirectly related to political issues, reflecting political dynamics and positions ^[2]. Secondly, political news is strict and formal in language expression. Finally, political news emphasizes readability and popularity. By using easy-to-understand language and avoiding overly complex sentences, political news ensures wide dissemination and acceptance of information.

2.3. Functions of political news

Political news provides a way for the general public to understand the ideas, guidelines, and dynamics of national development, and the content of political news reflects the trends of political development, demonstrates the results of economic development, and also reflects the optimization of the living conditions of the grass-roots people, infrastructure, and so on ^[3]. However, in the special context of China, Chinese political news also plays an important role in the world and is an important channel for outsiders to understand China's political ecology and decision-making process, which helps to enhance China's international image and influence and improve the international community's understanding and recognition of China.

3. Skopos theory

The word "skopos" is of Greek origin, which means purpose, goal, and object in the translation process. Functionalism argues that the translation process is an act with a cross-cultural purpose, and that the purpose pursued by a translated language determines the characteristics of the language itself.

3.1. Previous studies on Skopos theory

As the first introduction of German functionalist translation theory in China, the famous translator Gui published the article *Three Translators in Federal Germany* ^[4]. However, in the CNKI, articles searched with the keyword “Skopos Theory” were mainly published after 2013. These articles cover a wide range of translation topics, including the definition of translation, translation methods and techniques, translation teaching methods, and literary translation. Firstly, numerous studies focus on the selection of translation methods and techniques under the guidance of Skopos theory. In addition, Liu and Ma explored suitable translation strategies to enhance the quality of translation of tourism materials from the perspective of Skopos theory ^[5]. Secondly, there is literature that explores the Skopos theory in combination with teaching practice. For example, Xie argued that in university English translation teaching, students should be oriented to the Skopos theory and flexibly use translation strategies and methods as a way to improve the practical ability of English translation ^[6]. Zhang, on the other hand, further revealed the many problems encountered in the process of integrating the Skopos theory into the innovation of university English translation teaching mode, and put forward specific solutions, aiming to promote the enhancement and comprehensive development of Chinese university students’ English translation ability ^[7]. Finally, a number of experts in the field of linguistics have continued to deepen their research on the Skopos theory, making it an indispensable core element in the system of functional translation theory. Every year, a large number of academic papers related to it emerge at home and abroad. For example, Zhong, under the framework of Skopos theory, discussed in depth the characteristics of Business English translation in the hotel industry ^[8].

Overall, academics have generally recognized the solid theoretical foundation that Skopos theory has demonstrated in translation practice, and that it has provided strong guidance and support for translation work.

3.2. Principles of Skopos theory

The Skopos theory encompasses three core principles: the principle of Skopos, the principle of coherence, and the principle of fidelity. These three principles together constitute the theoretical basis of the Skopos theory.

3.2.1. Skopos principle

“Skopos theory holds that the target reader is an important determinant of translation purpose, highlighting the role and importance of the target reader. Translation should meet the needs of target readers, and different target groups have different needs, so translation strategies should be adjusted accordingly” ^[9]. Skopos principle emphasizes the purposefulness and functionality of translation activities and gives full consideration to the needs and expectations of the target audience, and provides strong guidance for translation practice and promotes the innovation and development of translation activities.

3.2.2. Coherence principle

“The rule of coherence requires that the version should conform to the original, to the intercultural communication, accepted by the reader” ^[10]. The principle of coherence emphasizes the need for translations to conform to the grammatical norms of the target language to ensure fluency and comprehensibility. “Also, the linguistic form should also be taken into account so that the target text could comply with the grammatical requirement of target language” ^[11]. Therefore, to make the target text flow naturally in the target language and conform to its grammatical norms, the translator needs to have an in-depth understanding of the target language and be able to utilize its linguistic forms flexibly.

3.2.3. Fidelity principle

The principle of fidelity embodies respect for the original text and a rigorous attitude towards translation activities. The principle of fidelity emphasizes the interlingual coherence and consistency between the original text and the translated text, and the translator’s ability to understand and interpret the original text. As Zhou said, fidelity depends on the translator’s thorough reading of the original text and the goal-oriented approach they follow in processing the translation ^[12]. Fidelity

principle holds that translators should comprehend the original text and convey the message, semantics, style, and tone of the original text as much as possible, and they also need to make necessary adjustments and innovations according to the purpose of translation and the needs of the target audience.

4. Application of Skopos theory in political news

Translation is not only the conversion of language but also the transmission of culture. According to the specific context, the translator should skillfully adjust the way to reproduce the original text.

4.1. Amplification

In the process of translation, given the significant differences in culture, tradition, history, social customs, and level of development between the Chinese and English, translators not only need to grasp the deeper meaning of the original text, but also need to take into account the characteristics of the target language as well as the cultural background of the target readers, and carry out appropriate semantic amplification and interpretation. Through amplification, translators can effectively achieve smooth cross-cultural communication, build a bridge of understanding and communication between individuals or groups of different cultural backgrounds, and thus ensure that the translation can faithfully convey the meaning of the original text.

Example 1: 加强人才国际交流，用好用活各类人才。深化人才发展体制机制改革，真心爱才、悉心育才、倾心引才、精心用才，求贤若渴，不拘一格，把各方面优秀人才集聚到党和人民事业中来。

Translation ^[1]: We will increase international personnel exchanges and make the best use of talent of all types to fully harness their potential. We will further reform the systems and mechanisms for talent development and ensure we value talented people, nurture them, attract them, and put them to good use. No effort should be spared and no rigid boundaries drawn in the endeavor to bring together the best and the brightest from all fields for the cause of the Party and the people.

This translation adopts the amplification and Skopos principle. The expression “用好用活各类人才” is translated into “make the best use of the talent of all types to fully harness their potential,” which reveals and explains the deeper meaning of this phrase while adding vocabulary to the expression. The expression “用活” means “to use well” and not literally “to use to live.” The rigor of political news is reflected. Besides, “Cross-cultural translation principles should also respect and consciously safeguard cultural diversity” ^[13]. When translating Chinese idioms, amplification and explanatory translations are often more effective than word-by-word translations. Hence, the expression “求贤若渴，不拘一格” ^[2] is translated as “No effort should be spared and no rigid boundaries drawn,” which explains the original text’s attitude towards the thirst for talents, the urgent pursuit of talent and its determination to introduce talents out of the box, which also implies the fidelity principle to convey the emotional color of the original text. That expression also reflects China’s cherishing of talent, which enhances China’s international image and influence. Amplification translations are often easier for the audience to understand, which is worthy of praise.

4.2. The change of the voice

In English, passive voice is presented in the fixed form of “be + past participle.” The frequent use of passive voice in English political news aims to emphasize the facts from an objective and impartial point of view, and at the same time helps readers to grasp the key information quickly. “When people read, they only focus on the part they are interested in. When readers read newspaper articles, the words or phrases that first enter the reader’s gaze are relatively easy to attract readers’ attention. For this reason, the passive voice moves the recipient of the action to the beginning of the sentence” ^[7].

Example 2: 他补充道，对（乡村振兴重点帮扶县、易地搬迁集中安置区等）重点地区，要进一步落实财政、金融、土地、人才等倾斜性支持政策，帮助他们创造美好生活。

Translation ^[3]: He added that more preferential policies on monetary, financial, land, and talent resources will be continuously given to some key areas, including counties, to help them achieve better lives.

Firstly, the translation is coherent and logical, and the addition of “including counties” clarifies the scope of the key areas, which demonstrates the formal nature of political news, so that readers can easily understand the intention of the original text. Secondly, the translation skillfully converts the active voice of the original text into passive voice, such as “more preferential policies will be continuously given,” placing the different aspects of the original policy at the front of the sentence. It clarifies the focus of the news and facilitates the readers to get the key information, which is also in line with the English expression habit, and makes the translation more natural and fluent. In addition, the translation retains the key information of the original text, such as “fiscal, financial, land, talent, and other inclined support policies,” which ensures that the information is accurately conveyed. Word-for-word translation belongs to the literal translation strategy. Literal translation is preferable if it does not cause misunderstanding^[14]. These are the products of the coherence principle and fidelity principle.

4.3. Extension

Extension is a translation technique that is particularly suitable for dealing with idioms and slang. It centers on finding counterparts in the target language that match or are similar to the meaning of idioms in the source language. By using the existing expressions in the target language, the translator can retain the uniqueness and flavor of the idioms of the source language to the greatest extent possible, thus making the translation easier to understand and accept by the target language readers.

Example 3: 中国现在追求的是高质量发展而不是量的高速增长。这种高质量发展是由“新质生产力”和创新来推动的。高质量发展并非一蹴而就，而是受内外因素共同影响。

Translation^[5]: China is now pursuing high-quality development as opposed to high-speed, quantitative growth. Its pursuit has been boosted by “new quality productive forces” and new innovations. This is not a bolt from the blue; instead, it has been conditioned by internal and external factors.

“The cultural transformation principle is not just a process of language transformation, but also a social phenomenon of communication between two cultures”^[15]. The translation of idioms and slang is a good example of this. In the English idiom “bolt from the blue,” the word “bolt” in this case means “lightning,” and “the blue” means “the sky.” However, after extension, this idiom can be used to describe something completely unexpected, suggesting a sudden event, like a bolt of lightning from a clear blue sky. Nevertheless, the expression “一蹴而就”^[6] means to take one step and succeed, which describes things as being easy by extension. This idiom is usually pejorative, but because the negative word “not” is in the sentence, it fits the context. It shows that high-quality development is not achieved suddenly or by accident, but only after a long period of hard work and the combined influence of many factors. This demonstrates translators’ rational knowledge and affirmation of China’s actual national conditions, as well as their implied hope for the future development of China. So in this context, “bolt from the blue” is preceded by a negative sense to convey the meaning of “一蹴而就.” The Chinese idiom “一蹴而就” and the English idiom “bolt from the blue” have been reasonably extended in their respective linguistic contexts, and in the end, lexical equivalence has been achieved, making the translations very relevant to the original text. Finally, the expression “受内外因素共同影响” was translated as “has been conditioned by internal and external factors” instead of “affected by both internal and external factors,” which is concise and conforms to the English expression habit. There is a subtle difference between the meaning of “be conditioned by” and “be affected by,” with the former mostly referring to being restricted by objective as well as natural conditions that cannot be changed by oneself. The latter mostly refers to being influenced by emotions and language. The discretionary choice of this terminology reflects the rigor and formality of political news.

5. Conclusion

This paper provides an in-depth discussion and summary of the study of the English translation of *China Daily*. Through a comparative analysis of the original text and the translated text, it discusses in detail the practical application of some

translation methods and techniques guided by the Skopos theory in the process of English translation, and especially mentions the importance of patriotic awareness for Chinese translators.

In conclusion, English translation of Chinese political news requires translators to make flexible use of translation methods and techniques under the guidance of the Skopos theory, and at the same time to love the motherland, possess national sentiment, and have patriotic consciousness. Through continuous practice and exploration, they can constantly improve the level of English translation and make a greater contribution to the promotion of Chinese culture and international exchange.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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