

A Study on News Translation of The Economist from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

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Abstract: Twenty-one century has seen a great progress in China's technological development in all walks of life, including space flight, medical science and digital economy. From previous tons of English-to-Chinese translations to nowadays standard Chinese-to-English translations in terms of Chinese culture. With the improvement of translating theories, the sector is well-performed. It is imperative to write down-to-earth reports in critical thinking. Why skopos theory is appropriate for news translation has been explained. For problems in news in 2023, the points has been solved with translation methods. The goal of the thesis is to provide new solutions when facing at problems in translating, and to analyze examples in order to solve the points.

Keywords: C-E News Translation for Foreign Audience; News Headlines Translation; Skopos Theory; Translation Techniques

1. Introduction

The conversion of language should be centered around the expression habits of the target language. Communication not only allow people to safely cross rivers and remove obstacles, but also symbolize a kind of connectivity—connecting various regions to each other. Nowadays, translation software has emerged in various forms. While technology provides convenience for students, it also creates a certain degree of dependence and inertia. In the case of cultural loss and mistakes caused by the lack of a corresponding translation for the target language in human translation, it is necessary for linguistic experts and translators to combine certain applied theories to explore translation standards and even the industry field in response to the different problems exiting in the translation.

In order to make foreign media and the world well-informed China, how to better promote Chinese news to the international world is a challenge in the field of translation, and how to solve these problems is a key focus of the thesis.

2. News Translation from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

2.1 Pragmatic Translation

Pragmatic translation is a practical translation that primarily aims to convey information while also emphasizing the effectiveness of transmission. In terms of content, it almost encompasses all works except literary translation. This includes various texts used in people's daily communication and applications, covering various aspects such as external publicity, social life, production fields, business activities, etc. ^[1] News publicity translation undoubtedly belongs to them.

2.2 Skopos Theory

The skopos rule is mainly developed from the following three principles: The primary principle to be followed in all translation activities is the “purpose principle”, which is the first of the three principles. This means that translation should immerse oneself in the different contexts and current cultural purposes of the target language. Coherence rule is also highly valued in the process of news translation. The translation should enable readers to understand and generate certain meanings in the context of the target culture through an international perspective, in order to achieve the ultimate effect and purpose of news dissemination. From the perspective of skopos theory, Fidelity rule applies to translated texts and discourse.

Skopos theory is reflected in the expression of Chinese characteristic vocabulary and syntax, better preserving the translation practice of Chinese cultural characteristics. Because of practical translation experience, it has been concluded that news is a type of writing style that requires conciseness and accurate expression, and headlines are often used in personification and active voice. For the aim of good translations, starting from the function and purpose of translation, with the principle of skopos theory as the core. Therefore, the translation of news publicity texts needs to follow the skopos theory to better play its role.

3. The Existing Problems on News Headlines

From the perspective of translation of intangible cultural heritage, on December 22, UNESCO selected human intangible cultural heritage and included it in the “Representative List of Human Intangible Cultural Heritage”. Subsequently, China, as a country with a deep foundation and rich cultural background, began to attach importance to the country’s cultural publicity to the abroad. At that time, the coverage of intangible cultural heritage on the internet and newspapers was overwhelming, which became the “buzz words” of the time. The translations were also diverse, with several versions available at that time: non-material heritage, immaterial heritage, non-substantial heritage, non-matter cultural legacy...But this is not the standard translation adopted. The standard translation should be: intangible heritage. This is in line with the official standard expression provided in English, so during the translation process, one should not expect words to have new meanings and start translating without preparation.

This example is given to illustrate that translation is a complex communicative behavior. Starting from the language of the original work, achieve the final presentation effect of “sinicization” or “westernization”. On the basis of these existing theories, the problem of mistranslation in news translation can be solved through the analysis of news translation texts.

4. Examples on News Translation of The Economist from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

Looking back at the beginning of 2023, let’s take a look at the unforgettable voice of China, the moment of China, and the story of China. Interpreting and think from three aspects: vocabulary, sentences, and grammar.

4.1 Lexical Level

Source texts: 高强度工作激起了人们对“996”工作制的厌恶。

Version 1: High-intensive work revived people’s hatred for the “996” scheme.

Version 2: High-intensive work revived people’s hatred for the “996” scheme— meaning they start work at 9am, leave at 9pm and work six days a week.

Reflection: The South China Morning Post’s related report uses the notorious “996” overtime culture. overwork culture (Financial Times) the brothel work culture (Financial Times) overwork culture (South China Morning Post) brothel “996” work schedule (South China Morning Post)

Foreigners may not necessarily understand what 996 is, so here we need to explain or add translator annotations to achieve the principle of purpose, so that the audience can understand this missing expression and achieve the purpose of conveying the translation effect.

4.2 Syntactic Level

The processing method of translation skills is very flexible, and based on the analysis of sentence structure components, the following three types of classification methods are used here: word order (Syntactic linearity and inverted translation), combination (recasting), and transformation (Division and combination).

4.2.1 Syntactic Linearity and Inverted Translation

In order to be consistent with Chinese customs. If the English expression is consistent with Chinese, it will be translated in sequence, while if it is opposite, it will be translated in reverse.

In Chinese, we are accustomed to relying on descriptive text and rendering idioms. But English is completely different. Native English speakers are more accustomed to making critical and objective statements about the text. English writing and reading always approach problems from a critical thinking perspective, which is why translators need to pay attention to understanding and interpreting from the perspective of the target audience when making translator annotations.

Source texts: 周一, 知乎(中国版 Quora)上出现了几条帖子, 称预制菜销售不透明, 这一消息才曝光。

Target texts: The news came to light on Monday after several posts emerged on Zhihu, the Chinese equivalent to Quora, alleging the sale of prefabricated food is hiddenness.

Reflection: This is a typical inverted translation method, where come to light refers to being known, and there is also an appositive explanation corresponding to Chinese social software Zhihu. It can be seen that the English expression habit is to add descriptive text first, and then state the facts. In English, the subject and sentence information are placed at the back, which is common in some sentences with longer subjects.

4.2.2 Recasting

Recasting refers to the conversion of parts of speech, sentence structure, and voice in the original sentence during the translation process in order to make the translation conform to the expression, methods, and habits of the target language.

4.2.3 Division and Combination

Decomposing syntax is the process of translating a long and complex sentence into several shorter and simpler sentences, The merging method is to combine several short sentences into one long sentence. Chinese emphasizes parataxis, which prefers a loose structure and more simple sentences; English emphasizes hypotaxis, which has a more rigorous structure and long sentences.

Source texts: 中国春节票房欣欣向荣，正发生令人惊讶的变化。《满江红》和《流浪地球2》这两部电影预计均将超过7亿美元，这对两部正面交锋的电影来说是前所未有的。

Target texts: China's booming Lunar New Year box office is undergoing a surprise shakeup, but both films (Full River Red and The Wandering World2) are forecast to finish their runs with over \$700 million apiece — an unprecedented outcome for two movies competing head to head.

Reflection: This sentence reflects the multiple translations from Chinese to English. The use of “but” here is not a turning point, but rather to emphasize consistent facts and serve as a reinforcing tone - this usage is rare. This part reflects English thinking very much. Westerners pay attention to “critical thinking” and often describe things from the perspective of themselves, often saying “what happens to which person”.

4.3 Grammatical Level

News often uses passive voice, which is very similar to the translation of technological genres. Passive voice can reflect objectivity without adding artificial emotional biases. English news headlines are concise and often use continuous and present tenses.

5. Summary

The CEO of Google once mentioned that if you want to know what will happen in the world, go watch *The Economist*. But how to translate Chinese news reports with the original characteristics in this trend has been analyzed in the article with specific examples, and providing new ideas for future news translations as reference.

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