

Faithfulness in the Chinese-English Translation of Diplomatic News from the Perspective of "Political Equivalence"

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ABSTRACT

The Chinese-to-English translation of diplomatic news holds a pivotal position in international communication, and the precise conveyance of information is of profound significance for promoting international understanding of China's politics, economy, culture, and military affairs. From the perspective of political equivalence, through in-depth analysis of the effective use of political terms, expressions with Chinese characteristics and the syntax of ancient poetry in translation, it can be fully proved that faithfulness, that is, the principle of fidelity can be effectively realized. Thus, the combination of flexible translation strategies and deep cross-cultural understanding can effectively improve the quality of Chinese-English translation of diplomatic news and enhance China's international discourse power.

KEYWORDS

diplomatic news; Chinese-to-English translation; faithfulness; political equivalence

1 Introduction

As a form of communication that transcends languages and cultures, the Chinese-English translation of diplomatic news requires translators to possess not only a solid language foundation but also a rich and profound knowledge in culture. When engaging in the translation of diplomatic news, faithfulness to the original text is the primary principle and core requirement of the translation work. However, given that diplomatic news covers various fields such as politics, economics, and culture, and possesses its unique linguistic style and cultural connotations, the translation process is often fraught with challenges, making it anything but easy to ensure the achievement of "faithfulness".

Diplomatic news not only exhibits the common characteristics of news translation but, due to its diplomatic nature, also incorporates unique features of foreign affairs. It primarily aims to promote China's main policies, political ideologies, laws and regulations, principles of international relations, and foreign exchange ideas, with the purpose of conveying China's voice to the world and shaping the country's international image.

Additionally, diplomatic news falls into the category of political translation. "Political translation necessitates a focus on politics and requires translators to possess good political literacy, such as accurate understanding of political policies, the ability to track and grasp current political news, the capability to accumulate and summarize background knowledge of news, insight into international relations, and sensitivity to political language and wording." (Li Qin, 13)

2 Translation Strategies in Chinese-English Translation of Diplomatic News

The ultimate pursuit of translation art is embodied in the harmonious unity of the three principles of "faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance" advocated by Mr. Yan Fu. Subsequently, Mr. Lin Yutang, in his book *On Translation*, reexpounds the translation standards and puts forward new standards of faithfulness, smoothness and beauty, which echo Yan Fu's principles. What's more, the two put "faithfulness" in the first place.

In the Chinese-English translation of diplomatic news, foreignization strategy has been widely adopted, which can fully show the unique language style and structure of Chinese and faithfully convey the intention and purpose of the original author, so as to promote Chinese traditional culture more effectively and highlight the national confidence. In recent years, Chinese scholar Yang Mingxing proposed the principle of "political equivalence" in diplomatic translation. (Yang Mingxing, 2008) The principle of "political equivalence", derived from Eugene Nida's theory of "functional equivalence", emphasizes the accurate understanding and faithful communication of the political connotation of the source text. At the same time, it requires that the target language audience can understand the way to ensure that the political meaning and information obtained by both sides are equivalent, so as to achieve the maximum degree of the translation and the original text in the communicative function of equivalence. This translation principle provides important guidance on the standards, procedures and specific methods of political text translation, and is widely used in translation practice, especially in the field of foreign affairs and diplomatic language translation.

However, Chinese-English translation should not be limited by a specific theoretical framework, but should be flexible according to the actual situation, so as to convey the diplomatic ideas of our country accurately and succinctly.

3 Realization of “Political Equivalence”

Diplomatic news translation is very challenging, requiring the translator to accurately convey the meaning of the original text, while achieving “political equivalence”, that is, preserving the language style and characteristics of the original text. In order to achieve this goal, the translator must not only be proficient in both Chinese and English, but also have a deep understanding of diplomatic news reports. Diplomatic journalism often involves intricate political relationships, highly sensitive political vocabulary and terminology, and distinctive language styles and expressions. Therefore, translators must have a solid political knowledge, as well as rich practical experience in translation, in order to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of translation, so as to achieve “political equivalence”.

3.1 Political Terms

In translation practice, the translation of political texts should convey the political meaning of the original text as much as possible, and retain the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the original text within the acceptable range. Therefore, from the perspective of “political equivalence”, translators need to find a balance between being faithful to the original text and adapting to the target language readers, so as to achieve effective cross-cultural communication and accurate transmission of political information.

Firstly, the translator must ensure that readers of the target language understand the essence of the Chinese political concept, while also taking into account political contexts and cultural differences. For instance, “中国特色社会主义” emphasizes a distinct development path and ideology. Its English translation should not only need to accurately convey its literal meaning but also transmit the profound cultural and historical connotations behind it. Therefore, when translating, the translator needs to appropriately adjust the expression, based on fidelity to the original text, to suit the acceptance habits of the target language readers. Hence, “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics” was finalized through in-depth research and extensive discussions by Chinese scholars and translators, serving as an excellent embodiment of the principle of political equivalence. Similarly, the translation “the core socialist values” accurately captures the essence of the political concept of “社会主义核心价值观”, preserving the political characteristics of the original while aligning with English expression, thus gaining widespread recognition and application.

In addition, when translating political terminology, the translator must also consider the reception ability and comprehension depth of the target language readers. For example, in translating the concept of “中国梦”, the translator has to deliver not only its literal meaning but also the profound cultural and political connotations behind it. A successful translation strategy is to render it as “the Chinese Dream”, which retains the mystery and cultural uniqueness of the original term while facilitating understanding and acceptance by English readers. Through this approach, the translator not only achieves linguistic conversion but also fosters cultural exchange and understanding.

Furthermore, the translation of political terminology should also take into account contextual adaptability. The same political term may require different translation strategies in different contexts. For instance, “改革开放” may be translated as either “reform and opening-up” or “reform and opening policy” in various contexts to fit the specific sentence or paragraph. Translators can flexibly apply translation techniques to ensure that the translation accurately conveys the political intention and cultural connotations of the original text in different contexts.

In translation practice, translators should also pay attention to the timeliness and accuracy of political terminology. As the political environment evolves, the meanings of certain political terms may change, and translators need to update their knowledge in a timely manner to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of their translations. For instance, the “Four Comprehensives strategic layout” may have different emphases in different historical periods. When translating, translators should determine its accurate meaning based on the latest policy documents and official interpretations, thereby guaranteeing the authority and accuracy of the translation.

3.2 Chinese-style Expression

Chinese-style Expression refers to English expressions with distinctive Chinese characteristics. For a long time, the academic community has been accustomed to evaluating the quality of English translations of Chinese texts based on whether they are “idiomatic” – that is, whether they conform to English expression. This practice reflects a lack of independent voice in the field of translation in China. As Marx once said, the economic level determines the superstructure. For a long period after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, China’s many rights and interests in the international community were not fully protected, and it was unable to voice its own opinions. The fundamental reason for this was the lag in economic development and the inadequacy of national strength.

However, with China’s rapid economic development and significant enhancement of comprehensive national strength, its international status and influence are steadily rising. China has actively participated in the reform and construction of the global governance system and made important contributions to promoting the construction of a

community with a shared future for mankind. In the field of translation, the shift from “English-to-Chinese” translations dominating in the past to the urgency of “Chinese-to-English” translations now indicates our urgent need to convey our voice to the world. When engaging in foreign translation, influenced by Chinese, English translations inevitably bear traces of “Chinglish.” As Yan Wenbin said, “as China’s national strength gradually increases and its international status gradually improves, the international ‘desire’ to listen to China is also increasing. In this situation, ‘Chinese-style Expression’ has the potential to be accepted and even re-disseminated internationally” (Yan Wenbin, 2015). Chinese-style expression not only enhances the international community’s understanding of China’s political discourse but also facilitates communication and cooperation between China and the world, while also making positive contributions to the exchange and integration of the world’s diverse cultures.

3.3 Ancient Chinese Poetry and Prose

“Political equivalence” is indeed reflected in the English translation of ancient Chinese poetry and prose. On international diplomatic occasions, Chinese leaders often quote ancient poetry and prose to express their ideological concepts and political stances. These works not only showcase China’s rich cultural heritage but are also invaluable cultural treasures that we should actively inherit and promote.

In translating ancient Chinese poetry and prose, translators must consider not only the direct conversion of language but also the transmission of cultural connotations. For instance, elements such as allusions, idioms, and historical backgrounds found in ancient texts necessitate that translators possess a profound understanding of culture and proficient translation skills in order to find appropriate expressions in the target language. Additionally, the translation of ancient poetry poses the challenge of handling its rhyme and rhythm. Given the distinct differences in poetic rhyme and rhythm between English and Chinese, translators must strive to recreate the musicality of the original poem in the target language while preserving its artistic conception. This task not only tests the translator’s linguistic proficiency but also their artistic creativity.

A very famous Chinese saying, “有朋自远方来，不亦乐乎？”，once said by Confucius, frequently used in international exchanges, and its translations have shown diversity. Among numerous versions, the expression of “Is it not a delight after all to have friends come from afar?” is considered standard due to its conciseness, accurate semantics, and formal style, and it has been included in the commonly used vocabulary for foreign affairs. Another translation, “How happy we are, to meet friends from afar!”, achieves a high degree of equivalence with the original text in terms of sound, form, and meaning, and is regarded as a model of translation, particularly suitable for diplomatic occasions such as receptions. (Pi Demin, 2010)

Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing once quoted the famous line from Liu Yuxi in the Tang Dynasty: “山不在高，有仙则名”. Its translation, “A mountain, high or low, will be famous when people find immortals there.” (Wu Weixiong and Wu Qingwen, 2009), adopts a strategy combining literal and free translation. This translation not only accurately conveys the meaning of the original phrase but also aligns with English grammatical structures, making it a fitting rendering in the target language.

The translation of ancient Chinese poetry and prose is a complex and arduous task that requires translators to possess not only solid language skills but also profound cultural literacy and artistic sensibility. Only in this way can they achieve “political equivalence” in translation, enabling readers of the target language to accurately understand and appreciate the beauty of the original poetry or prose.

4 Conclusion

In the process of translating diplomatic news, translators should adhere to the promotional principles of seriousness, caution, objectivity, and accuracy. They should demonstrate China’s firm political stance and regard “faithfulness” as the core principle of translation, ensuring that every word and phrase is carefully deliberated, thoughtfully chosen, and accurately conveys China’s political and diplomatic messages. Achieving “political equivalence” in diplomatic news translation is often not an easy task, influenced by many factors, including language differences, cultural backgrounds, political contexts, and the choice of translation strategies. To overcome these challenges, translators need to possess a solid language foundation, extensive knowledge, and rich translation experience. At the same time, they should also focus on cultivating cultural exchange and communication abilities.

In the future, with the deepening of globalization and the increasing frequency of international exchanges, the importance of Chinese-to-English translation in diplomatic news will become even more prominent. Translators need to continuously strengthen their professional knowledge, enhance their political sensitivity, and improve their cross-cultural communication abilities. Additionally, the use of advanced translation technology and equipment is crucial for improving translation quality and efficiency. Only in this way can they ensure that Chinese-to-English translation of diplomatic news

plays a more significant role in promoting international exchanges and understanding.

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