

Cultural Image Interpreting in Metaphors of Press Conferences

Jin Wu

School of Business Administration, Liaoning Radio and TV University, Shenyang, China

77823457@qq.com

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Abstract. The interpreting of the cultural images embedded in the metaphors from press conferences in China is considered as one of the most demanding challenges for translators. Under the Functionalist theory, the specific strategies employed may take the target function of the version as well as the addressees' receiving environment into due consideration. Four types of contexts for retaining the cultural images are discussed with corresponding interpreting strategies. The analysis of the discourse should include the cultural context, situational context, along with the relationship between the discourse and contexts.

Introduction

As an oral branch of translation, the study of press conference interpreting in China presents some features that may exert prominent impact on the translation procedures and strategies. The publicity rendering usually adopts consecutive interpretation. Among a great variety of press conferences in China, the annual press conference held after the Two Sessions (NPC and CPPCC) serves as one of the most influential events for the public. It is a source to learn the up-to-date policies, trends and plans in the political, economic and diplomatic domains in China. The research for the interpreting in this field may pave the way for related publicity rendering training and practice.

As Senior Translator in China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Zhang Lu has been responsible for the interpreting of Press Conferences after Two Sessions during the past decade (except 2013). Her professional and competent performance impressed many audience and experts. It is very common to identify the well-known poems, sayings, proverbs and quotations in the speeches and replies of the speakers (Premiers of China). Some of them are easy to comprehend, while others may be in need of a sound cultural and historical background to understand the conveyed true intentions for the foreign journalists and audiences. As the most frequently employed means of figures of speech, metaphor is a regular approach to convey cultural and implied messages. Taking the practical cases from the press conferences of Two Sessions in the past decade (2010-2019) as examples, this study tends to penetrate into the interpreting process and strategies in culture-loaded metaphors.

Literature Review

Literature Review of Translation Strategies of Cultural Terms

Metaphors with culture-loaded words or expressions often may resort to various interpreting methods, especially in such literary works as best-selling novels, classics and poems. The English natives may impose more expectations for the literature features and intentions of the originals. It can be concluded that the usually employed interpreting methods cover transliteration, free translation, literal translation, literal translation plus annotation, full translation, partial translation and direct borrowing. In some contexts, correspondence, reduction and interpretation means also came into play [1].

Literature Review of Schools of Translation Studies in This Field

Throughout the various branches of translation studies in this domain, there are several schools probed into the research of press conference of Two Sessions. One of the most influential divisions is the theory of interpretative translation, which dated back to 1960s in France. It is designed to

“deverbalize from the original” and “reverbalize in the target” from the perspective of sense equivalence [2]. Another school, Adaption Theory, proposes the dynamic adaption to the pragmatic context elements [3]. Some experts attach attention to the translator’s subjectivity, which includes certain social and political elements, such as diplomatic awareness, sensibility and cross-culture communications [4]. The majority of the above schools centered on the relationship between the source text and the target text. Also, the source text surpassed the target text during the process of acquiring “equivalence” in some aspects [5]. In this sense, “equivalence” serves as a concept that is consequence-targeted and static to achieve similar communication value between the linguistic units.

Source Text Analysis of Metaphor Interpreting

From the Perspective of Functional Translation Approach

Initiated by German translation theorist Hans Vermeer, Functionalist approach stresses the Skopos and process analysis, translation methods and skills should be conducted to satisfy the target function on the basis of original discourse. Vermeer proposed that translation action is a trans-cultural activity, translation means is in the charge of the designed function. “Equivalence” is no longer the decisive yardstick for satisfying version, and to meet the target readers expectations is served as precedence. Another representative of Functionalist, Katharina Reiss claimed the discourse functional equivalence and concluded the concept of integrated comprehensive communication. The most scientific system came from Christiane Nord, which specify the functional typology and a top-down hierarchy of translation problem settlement [6].

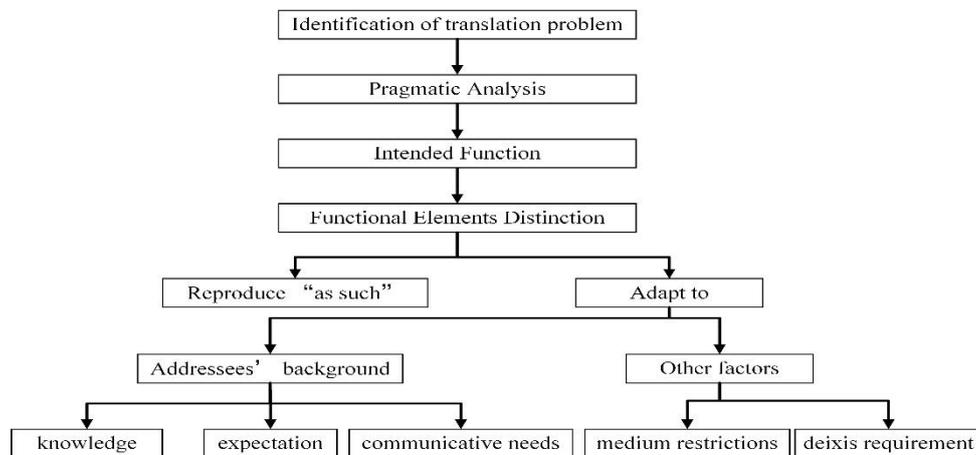


Fig. 1 Top-down problem-solving approach

From the Perspective of Functional Linguistics

As language and culture are inter-connected and mutually influential, Functional linguistics also covered the study of discourse analysis and the translation process. In light of the functional discourse analysis, the intentional purpose of the target text will be assessed and classified as whether a satisfactory or unsatisfactory version. As it seems indeed demanding to get the adequate effect in the interpreting process, the analysis should cover such contexts as culture, situation as well as the relationship between the contexts and discourse [7].

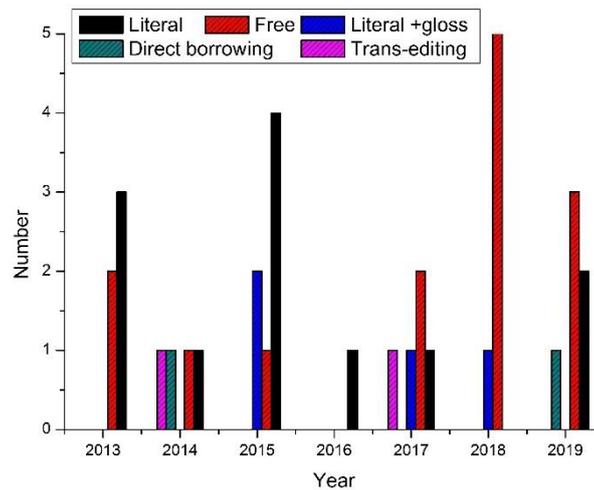
Under the framework of Functional Linguistics, the rendering process may be conducted by related discourse analysis from the linguistic perspective. The hierarchy contexts may be concluded as the cultural context (as in discourse typology), situational context (as in register), semantics (as in metafunctions) and finally language (as in lexis, phonology and graphology).

The following samples are classified and analyzed from both the Functional translation approach and the Functional linguistics by taking the top-down hierarchic problem-solving pattern.

Sample Analysis of Translation Strategy Employment

Statistics of Translation Types in Use

The samples of metaphor interpretation were extracted from the press conferences for Two Sessions in China dated from 2010 to 2019. The cases from the transcript amount to 34, with the main translating strategy and methods: literal translation, free translation, literal translation plus gloss, direct borrowing and trans-editing. The statistics for the distribution of translation types are listed as followed:



Notes: the cases of metaphor interpreting account for 34 items.

Fig. 2 Statistic results of translation types for metaphors

Sample Demonstration under Functionalist Guidance

The following examples are extracted from the transcript of the press conferences of Two Sessions in the past decade (2010-2019). The underlined parts contain the cultural images that require interpreting and transferring from Chinese to English. Also, the samples are classified under specific translation strategy or method.

- Literal translation:

(1) 大规模减税降费,是要动政府的存量利益,要割自己的肉。

Zhang's version: Digging into the government's own revenue stock for slashing taxes and fees would be like the government turning the blade of a knife to itself, which requires significant self-sacrifice.

The case used a direct form to express the metaphor because the cultural information indicated are easily accessible to both cultures and there is no need to change the formality of the original. The target expressive function may be achieved with no adaptations. Another case is as followed:

(2) 下一步,包括采取逐步纳入预算管理,开正门、堵偏门,规范融资平台等措施。

Zhang's version: In a word, we are going to keep the front gate open and block side doors.

Also, the original message indicated a metaphor: "front gate" for "the formal and approved approaches for financing", and "the side doors" for "the informal and disapproved ones". The implied information can be understandable for the target readers so literal interpreting came into play.

- Free translation:

For the linguistic and cultural contexts differ in many cases, it is suggested to change the original forms of metaphors and only convey the intentional meanings in the target versions. The cases in point can be readily identified, just to name a few.

(3) 办个事、创个业要盖几十个公章。

Zhang's version: They would need the approve of several dozens of departments to get something done or start their business.

(4)一是不能再欠新账,包括提高环保的门槛;二是加快还旧账,包括淘汰落后产能等。

Zhang's version: First, we shouldn't incur any new problems and raise the threshold of environmental protection. Second, we should speed up the efforts to overcome long-standing problems which includes phasing out backward production.

(5)我们还要继续去啃“硬骨头”。

Zhang's version: We are prepared to take on tough challenges in pursuing this reform initiative.

Examples (3), (4), and (5) displayed an indirect type of translation, for the cultural images embedded can hardly be found in the target context. And for the time limit and working load in the interpretation practice, the translator chose to retain the original meaning and delete the metaphoric forms. For instance, “公章”is transformed to “departments”; “新账、旧账”are rendered as “new problems and long-standing problems”; “硬骨头”is translated as “tough challenges”.

(6)一种办法是搞量化宽松,超发货币、大幅度提高赤字率,搞所谓“大水漫灌”,一时可能有效,但萝卜快了不洗泥,会带来后遗症,所以不可取。

Zhang's version: One possible option is to resort to quantitative easing, including excessive money supply and a much higher deficit-to-GDP ratio, flooding the economy with liquidity. Such an indiscriminate and expedient approach might work in the short run, but may also lead to future problems.

The original expressions “大水漫灌” were repeatedly quoted in Premier's speeches from the press conferences in 2016, 2017 and 2019. And it was interpreted as “massive” or “indiscriminate” for the colloquial expressions may lead to comprehension difficulty for the target addressees.

● Direct borrowing:

(7) (改革贵在行动) 喊破嗓子不如甩开膀子。

Zhang's version: Talking the talk is not as good as walking the walk.

The interpreter borrowed the English idiom with similar meaning, which was readily acceptable for the native addressees. However, the original figures of speech, metaphor, was omitted, as in “嗓子” (sang zi) for “words”, and “膀子”(bang zi) for “actions” in English. The style of the source text was kept to some extent, and the communicative purpose was achieved.

(8)消费和民生可以说是一个硬币的两面,我们需要合理的投资规模和消费增长。

Zhang's version: Consumption and people's well-being are like the two sides of the same coin.

Another case in point showed the direct borrowing method by using a well-known saying “Every coin has two sides”. The efficient cultural exchanges make the interpreting practice a sound match for reserving the cultural images.

● Literal plus gloss:

(9)我的问题是在2014年的时候中国的反腐行动已经使多只大老虎落网了,那么您认为如何从制度建设这方面入手进一步来推动反腐。

Zhang's version: China's anti-corruption campaign in 2014 has already brought down several big tigers, or high-ranking officials who have committed corruption. I would like to know what more steps will be taken to enhance institution building in fighting corruption?

(10)不是靠政府去提供“铁饭碗”,而是让人民群众用劳动和智慧去创造或者说打造“金饭碗”。

Zhang's version: The government's job is not to hand out the “iron rice bowl” or permanent jobs to the people, but to create enabling conditions for the people to use their own ingenuity and hard work to create or secure “gold rice bowls” so to speak.

The above two cases belong to the category of literal translation for keeping the cultural images of metaphors but a gloss with due explanations was also required in the cultural contexts. In this way, the original form was transferred also the understanding load was not amplified for the target readers.

● Trans-editing:

It is of great importance to keep the stylistic features in the target text. However, there is hardly any perfect match in most contexts in light of the target addressees' receiving situation and cultural background. In some cases, the translator may make necessary adjustment for the purpose of functional communication.

(11)我认为干一寸胜过说一尺。

Zhang's version: In this regard, even a small action is a lot more important than a thousand words.

The original text employed a length comparison between “一寸”and “一尺”,which are different length units from western culture. If the interpreter elaborates on the cultural contexts' distance, it will be unnecessary and redundant for the target readers. Therefore, the translator employed trans-editing, turning the comparison into “a small” and “a thousand”, to achieve the same intentional stylistic function.

Another case in point is read as followed:

而且中国很多企业是有企业文化的,他们对老职工有感情,去新岗位就业了,企业仍然还会给一些补贴,扶上马、送一程。

Zhang's version: Moreover, Chinese companies, whose corporate culture encourages close employer-employee relationships, will continue to provide subsidies to their loyal employees for some time to give them a leg-up.

The original expressed an image of seeing off someone by helping him get on the horse and escorting him for a certain distance. The implied meaning was to financially support the loyal employees after their layoff. The target text edited the original image, and employed the colloquial expression “leg-up”, which means help or assistance in English culture. The cultural image was partially retained with the similar communicative effect.

Patterns of Cultural Image Retaining

After analyzing and classifying the samples with various strategies, we may conclude the four patterns for retaining the cultural images in the target texts. The four patterns cover the complete re-presence of the original image; partial retaining of image; correspondence employment; and deletion of original image. The related translation types under each pattern is displayed as followed:

Table1. Translation types under culture-image retaining patterns

Complete re-presence	Partial retaining	Correspondence	Deletion of image
Literal	Literal +gloss Trans-editing	Direct borrowing	Free Zero translation

Summary

The current study of cultural image interpreting in press conferences presents the study essence of diplomatic translation. The application of discourse function, original analysis and hierarchic problem-solving pattern may shed light on the further research with a more scientific and systemic processing and evaluation mode. The culture interaction analysis and translation strategy and method discussion should also be feasible to related target-oriented approaches. Under the framework of Functionalist theory, the expected endeavor-cost and the target communicative needs may serve as a topic worth in-depth research.

Nonetheless, the empirical study was conducted with samples extracted from the past decade practice. It may not cover all the translation strategies or process. Also, the interpreter, Ms. Zhang Lu, can only provide individual evidence for the study, not universal guidelines. However, the cultural-image interpreting and retaining research may be of value to the international publicity and exchanges.

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