

A Study on the Publicity Translation in the Context of Global Epidemic from the Perspective of Thick Translation

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ABSTRACT

Thick translation is a concept related to cultural communication. It was first proposed by American translation theorist Anthony Appiah in 1993. [1] Nowadays, thick translation is an effective way to realize Chinese culture going out and carrying out publicity translation. At present, the Covid-19 epidemic continues to spread all over the world. In order to record the great course of the Chinese people's struggle against the epidemic, share China's action and experience in fighting the epidemic with the international community, and clarify the Chinese concept and Chinese proposition of global anti-epidemic, the State Council Information Office, PRC issued the *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action* on June 7, 2020. This article takes the *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action* and its translation version as the research object, summarizes the types and specific implementation methods of thick translation based on the paratext theory, and analyzes the cultural phenomena revealed in the *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action*. So, the future translation could better consider these factors to promote the communication of Chinese wit and wisdom.

Keywords: Thick translation, Paratext theory, *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action*, Publicity translation.

1. INTRODUCTION

After the outbreak of the Covid-19, China's positive response attitude and methods and the effectiveness of fighting against the epidemic have aroused widespread concern in the international community. While receiving high praise and support from the international community, some discordant voices have also appeared. Therefore, translators should take part in the "Going Out" of Chinese action in epidemic and introduce experiences to the international community. Translators have the responsibility and obligations to tell the world the touching stories of China's fight against the epidemic, so that the world can understand a real China, especially in the context of global epidemic. Under such circumstances, the State Council Information Office, PRC (In the following papers, it is referred to as the SCIO for short) issued the English translation of *Fighting*

Covid-19: China in Action on June 7, 2020. Obviously, the English translation of *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action* is one of the publicity translations.

Considering the special relation between publicity and its translation version, and the continued spread of the Covid-19 epidemic in the world, it is quite meaningful and valuable to have a study on the publicity translation in the context of global epidemic from the perspective of thick translation. Therefore, this paper intends to conduct a detailed and in-depth exploration for *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action* from the perspective of thick translation and through the analysis of the translated text.

The translation of *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action* plays a critical role in spreading Chinese culture and political ideas. By analyzing the application of thick translation theory in *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action*, it can fill in the gaps in the analysis of foreign publicity translation in the

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new era from the perspective of thick translation, and try to provide a basis for later researchers.

2. LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF THE TRANSLATION OF *FIGHTING COVID-19: CHINA IN ACTION*

The translation and publication *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action* is organized and implemented by the China Foreign Languages Bureau. With the support of the Chinese-English translation teams of the Institute of Contemporary China and the World, Foreign Languages Publishing House and other bureau-affiliated units, as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China Daily, Beijing International Studies University and other units, the translation project team completed the English translation, validation, editing and publication of the 37,000-word white paper with high quality in less than half a month.

Fighting Covid-19: China in Action mainly includes three parts: the foreword, body, and concluding afterword. The main text is divided into four parts: "China's Fight against the Epidemic: A Test of Fire", "Well-coordinated Prevention, Control and Treatment", "Assembling a Powerful Force to Beat the Virus" and "Building a Global Community of Health for All". According to data observation, the keywords of *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action* focus on epidemic prevention and control, such as control, virus, prevention, etc. The linguistic features of *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action* are as follows:

2.1 Four-character Structure

The four-character structure is concise, vivid, neat and symmetrical, with strong sense of rhythm and strong appeal, which is a treasure in Chinese language.

As a major feature of Chinese language, four-character structure is widely used in Chinese government political documents. Due to there is no corresponding language form in English, and the four-character structure used in political documents has political characteristics, its translation is not easy.

When searching the *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action*, there were many four-character structures, such as "support each other" (守望相助), "united as one" (众志成城), "unite and cooperate to mount a collective response" (同舟共济) and so on.

2.2 Metaphor

Fighting Covid-19: China in Action contains a large number of metaphorical expressions, which carry the Chinese cultural information contained in China's anti-epidemic practice.

Fighting Covid-19: China in Action uses metaphors such as the head, eyes, shoulders, hands, feet, and heart these different parts of the human body to express the relevant situation in the fight against the new coronary pneumonia epidemic.

2.3 Non-subject Sentences

The meaning of Chinese sentences is mainly expressed through internal logical relations, so some sentences do not need subjects. The non-subject sentences pattern can be found everywhere in *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action*, but English sentences generally must have a subject. Moreover, in political publicity, a clear subject can strengthen the speaker's tone and attitude and express a country's firm position.

Therefore, it is necessary for the translator to accurately determine the corresponding subject according to the context.

3. AN INTRODUCTION OF THE THICK TRANSLATION THEORY

The term "thick translation" evolved from Clifford Geertz's concept of "thick description". [2] Gilbert Ryle, an English language philosopher, put forward this concept thick description. Enlightened by the "thick description", Appiah introduced the concept of "thick translation" in 1993. In his paper *Thick Translation*, he defined thick translation as a translation strategy, which found the position of the text in a rich cultural and linguistic context through annotations and accompanying annotations. [1] This kind of thick translation will provide the target text readers with background knowledge in the source culture, and greatly promote readers' understanding.

As for the categories of thick translation, some scholars tend to classify them with the help of paratext theory. In the theory of paratext, "thick translation" can be divided into two categories: "thick translation" within the text and "thick translation" outside the text.

3.1 The Thick Translation Within Text

At first Appiah only regarded commentary or appended notes as a method of thick translation, but with the deepening of relevant research, the method of thick translation is no longer limited to this single model. There are also divergent opinions on the method of thick translation within the text in China. One thing that is widely recognized is that the thick translation within text refers to deep contextualized translation in the target text.

The author of this paper believes that there are many ways of thick translation within the text, such as transliteration, literal translation, liberal translation, etc., or a combination of these types of translation methods. In Chinese-English translation, sometimes Chinese characters even appear directly in order to let readers understand the cultural connotation of the vocabulary in the original text. For example, the "Chinese character + transliteration" method is often used in the Chinese classics, such as "Chung Ne", "Kung" in *the Life of Confucius*, which can not only allow readers to feel the form of Chinese characters, but also helps for readers' acceptance.

3.2 The Thick Translation Outside Text

The thick translation outside text can be interpreted as the epitext added by the translator to make readers understand the culture of the source language, including the foreword, publication information, illustrations, etc.

Many scholars believe that thick translation adopts the form paratext to provide contextual information for the target audience. Paratext is the core form of thick translation. Paratext is not only an inseparable part of the translation, but also an important carrier and channel for cross-cultural communication. [3]

The textual meaning of literary works depends not only on the content within the text, but also on many factors outside the text, one of which is paratext. In translation studies, we can get a lot of hidden information in the text by interpreting the paratext, and at the same time, we can explain the explicit information in the text. From the paratexts, we can obtain the most valuable first-hand information about the translator's translation ideas and translation methods, which is an important hypertext resource for reconstructing translation norms. Through the interpretation of the paratext, readers can return to the content understanding of

the translated text and further understand the cognitive model constructed by translators in translation activities, thus laying a solid foundation for a better understanding of the original text and the target text. The thick translation outside text can be interpreted as the epitext added by the translator to make readers understand the culture of the source language, including the foreword, publication information, illustrations, etc. Many scholars also believe that thick translation adopts the form paratext to provide contextual information for the target audience. Paratext is not only an inseparable part of the translation, but also an important carrier and channel for cross-cultural communication.

4. A STUDY ON THE APPLICATION OF THICK TRANSLATION THEORY IN THE PUBLICITY TRANSLATION OF *FIGHTING COVID-19: CHINA IN ACTION*

4.1 The Application of Thick Translation Within the Text

The thick translation within the text refers to deep contextualized translation in the target text. And with the deepening of relevant research, the method of thick translation is no longer limited to this single model. The application of Thick Translation Theory within the *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action* is as follows. In the following examples, the Chinese parts come from the Chinese version of *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action*, and English parts come from translation version of *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action* translated by the China Foreign Languages Bureau.

4.1.1 Transliteration

In the translation version, most of the names and places appearing in the original text are transliterated, as in the following example.

- Example 1

Source Text:

中共中央向湖北等疫情严重地区派出指导组。

(*The Chinese version of Fighting Covid-19: China in Action*)

Translation:

Central Party leadership would send a steering group to Hubei to oversee epidemic control on the ground. [4]

(Translation from *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action*)

4.1.2 Adding Determiners

- Example 2

Source Text:

取得了武汉保卫战、湖北保卫战的决定性成果。

Translation:

A decisive victory was secured in the battle to defend Hubei Province and its capital city of Wuhan. [4]

The translator does not directly use Wuhan to translate "武汉", but "Hubei Province and its capital city of Wuhan". Wuhan is located in Hubei Province, China, which is the capital city of Hubei Province. However, for foreign readers, some people may not know it well, so by adding determiners, the information can be transmitted more accurately.

4.1.3 Using common words

The translation of "鄂" in the text is Hubei province. The translator chose to use the common saying: Hubei, which is convenient for readers to understand.

4.1.4 Omission

The translator simply translates "国家主席、中共中央总书记、中央军委主席习近平" into Xi Jinping. The author of this paper maintains that this practice is to reduce the burden on readers. This kind of rough translation basically conveys the content of the source text. Although there is a loss of cultural information, it doesn't matter.

4.1.5 Liberal translation

There are many applications of liberal translation within the text. The author only gives the following examples at present:

4.1.5.1 Four-character Structure

When searching the *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action*, there are many four-character structures, such as "support each other" (守望相助), "united as

one" (众志成城), "unite and cooperate to mount a collective response" (同舟共济) and so on.

- Example 3

Source Text:

中国共产党和中国政府高度重视、迅速行动，习近平总书记亲自指挥、亲自部署、统揽全局、果断决策。

Translation:

The Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese government have addressed the epidemic as a top priority, and taken swift action. General Secretary Xi Jinping has taken personal command, planned the response, overseen the general situation and acted decisively. [5]

- Example 4

Source Text:

全国上下贯彻"坚定信心、同舟共济、科学防治、精准施策"总要求。

Translation:

The whole nation has followed the general principle of "remaining confident, coming together in solidarity, adopting a science-based approach, and taking targeted measures". [5]

The translator tries to keep consistent with the linguistic features of the original text when translating four-character structure, using words rigorously and nominalizing vocabulary is common. At the same time, in order to achieve the purpose of publicity, the translation follows the principle of conciseness on the basis of retaining its original intention, and its overall lexical features are close to those of the text of the same genre in the target language, which is more acceptable to the target language readers.

4.1.5.2 Metaphor

Fighting Covid-19: China in Action uses metaphors such as the head, eyes, shoulders, hands, feet, and heart these different parts of the human body to express the relevant situation in the fight against the new coronary pneumonia epidemic.

- Example 5

Source Text:

湖北省要把疫情防控工作作为当前头等大事。

Translation:

He urged Hubei to make epidemic control as its top priority. [4]

- Example 6

Source Text:

强调既要立足当前，科学精准打赢疫情防控阻击战，更要放眼长远。

Translation:

Immediate, science-based and targeted measures must be taken to stamp out the virus. Experience and lessons must be drawn to enhance preparedness in the future. [5]

The "头" is located at the top of the human body, which has important functions and status. It is urgent to highlight the epidemic prevention and control work with the "头等大事". As a supporting part of human body, "足" plays a fundamental role. "立足当下" shows that we must first solve the current problems in response to the epidemic situation, instead of setting too high a goal and making empty talk.

4.1.5.3 Non-subject Sentences

- Example 7

Source Text:

依法、及时、公开、透明发布疫情信息。

Translation:

China has released information on Covid-19 in a timely, open and transparent manner as required by law. [5]

- Example 8

Source Text:

建立严格的疫情发布机制。制定严格规定，坚决防止瞒报、迟报、漏报。

Translation:

A strict system of information release has been established. Strict regulations are in place to see there is no withholding of information, under-reporting, or delay in reporting cases of infection. [5]

The translation version of *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action* deals with most sentences without subjects by adding subjects or translating them into passive voice to highlight the subjects of sentences. Therefore, in the translation of political texts, for non-subject sentences, the subject of the sentence

should be determined according to the specific context, so as to indicate the attitude and position of the source language.

4.2 *The Application of Thick Translation Outside the Text*

The translation and publication of the English version of *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action* are organized and implemented by the China Foreign Languages Bureau. The translation project team has completed the English translation, examination, editing and publication of the 37,000-word white paper in less than half a month.

The purpose thick translation is to construct a rich cultural, social and textual context for the translation, and to provide the readers with background knowledge, which is convenient for the readers to understand and appreciate. After *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action* was released, its translation team held a lecture. In this way, readers can be guided to understand the principles and strategies to be followed in translation. A large number of examples are provided by the lecture to introduce how translators used various strategies to improve the effect of external communication during translation. For example, in the lecture, Huang Changqi mentioned that sensitive issues involving territorial sovereignty should be accurate and rigorous.

- Example 9

Source Text:

境内疫情总体呈零星散发状态。

(*The Chinese version of Fighting Covid-19: China in Action*)

Translation:

Sporadic cases have been reported on the mainland (of China). [4]

(*Translation from Fighting Covid-19: China in Action*)

As Huang Changqi Mentioned, "境" sometimes refers to "the territory of China" and sometimes refers to "customs territory", which must be carefully chosen before translation. Customs territory refers to areas where the same customs law or tariff system is applied. From the perspective of customs territory, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan Province, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu are separate customs territory in the World Trade Organization

and belong to "境外". In this case, "境内" refers to the Chinese mainland in the example sentence.

There are many applications of thick translation in the text, however, through research and comparison, this paper finds that there are still some problems in the English version of *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action*.

For example: There are many metaphor words in the original text, comparing the situation of epidemic to "大考", "试金石", "战争", "风雨" and "魔鬼", comparing China's anti-epidemic behavior to "网" and "堡垒", and comparing the stigmatization behavior of other countries to "甩锅".

The use of these metaphor words vividly shows China's active attitude towards the epidemic situation and the serious response of the people of the country. The translation strategies of these metaphors are basically literal translation, and some adopt liberal translation. However, the original image is erased and the English image is not used, but the general expression is used, which makes the translation unable to vividly restore the original meaning.

Therefore, if thick translation can be used in the process of translation, and appropriately added footnotes, annotations, etc. The target readers can better understand these metaphorical words with Chinese characteristics. [6]

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper, from the perspective of thick translation, took the *Fighting Covid-19: China in Action* as the research subject, summarized the types and specific implementation methods of "thick translation": thick translation within the text and thick translation outside the text.

In this thesis, although the research subject is the latest and most representative publicity translation works in China, but the study is limited by the research time, only based on this material, and cannot be compared horizontally with other conquest. Therefore, in case study, the lack of coverage may lead to the limitations of the research results, which need to be remedied by future research. Besides, some studies have certain subjectivity. In the process of research, the translation version involves a large number of translation strategies, but in the process of classification, it cannot describe accurately, define clearly, and there are areas of vague intersection. To overcome this defect, it is necessary to make a

comprehensive judgment through a number of researchers. The research conditions of this study are as follows: it is still unsatisfactory. It is hoped that it will be improved in the future research.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Qiqi Cui is responsible for corpus collection and literature analysis, Jingwei Guan wrote the manuscript, and Hongling Que contributed to revising and editing.

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