



A Study on Strategies in Chinese-English Political Translation and Interpretation

Bing Xiong^(✉)

Hong Kong Baptist University, Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong
willatama@poers.edu.pl

Abstract. Political translation, one of the most important translation areas, is important due to its sensitivity and specificity, as well as the national ideology. During the process of translation, translators are often required to use highly skilled translation techniques to proceed with words and sentences in text to achieve a high degree of precision in political texts and to convey the exact meaning of the speaker. This article reviews translation strategies for some difficult translation objects that appear in political texts: metaphors, political terms, cultural sentences, and idioms. The main findings were: 1) When metaphors appear in political texts, translators usually use the translation strategy of paraphrasing when the source text metaphor and the target text metaphor do not agree, while when the source text and the target text metaphor agree, translators will use the strategy of direct translation; 2) When translating Chinese political terms, translators usually complete the original meaning and explain it appropriately; 3) Culturally loaded words and sentences in political texts are often paraphrased. By analyzing the translation difficulties in these political texts, translators and interpreters will be able to handle their translation strategies appropriately and convey the speaker's meaning more accurately when translating political texts.

Keywords: translation strategies · political text · metaphor

1 Introduction

Political translation and interpretation, as an essential area of translation, has always received the attention of translators and commentators. Political speeches often represent the level of a country's foreign communication and reflect the characteristics of that country. At the same time, in the modern era of globalization, the dissemination of political-ideological views not only affects relations between countries but also the image of a country. How to "use words to get results" in order to effectively influence the decisions, behavior, and perceptions of other countries is central to the process of developing an external discourse system [1]. This is why the study of translation and interpretation in the political field is extremely important.

There are many scholars at home and abroad who have studied political translation and interpretation, and the literature is relatively abundant, especially on the translation of political texts of leaders' speeches [2, 3]. However, a few academics have recently

summarized all the literature on tactics, keywords, and principles in political translation through a visual study of the field of political translation studies [4, 5]. This article reviews three salient factors in Chinese-English political interpretation: metaphor, political terminology, and the cultural load carrier idioms and sentences. This literature review seeks to analyze previous studies on the strategies of these three important points of political translation and to argue for selected classical translations from recent political texts as examples.

Newmark and Baker are both the well-known translation theorists. The paper draws mainly on Newmark's translation strategies and Baker's translation theory as the core theories for analysis, and the review finds that the translation strategies for metaphors, terms and idioms, and archaic poems in politics have been mostly discussed in the literature from these theories.

2 Metaphor

This paper focuses on the concept of metaphor as delineated by cognitive linguists Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in their book *Metaphor We Live By*. In this book, they classify the concepts of metaphors into three types: orientational metaphors, ontological metaphors, and structural metaphors. These three types of concepts are also significantly reflected in political metaphors. According to the American political scientist Graeber, the political metaphor itself is made up of metaphors and uses political rhetoric to convey its message. The messaging of political metaphors in political contexts implies that not only are the explicit meanings but that political metaphors are also capable of understanding implicit meanings. At the same time, different countries have various cultures, histories, and basic national conditions, which often result in political metaphors having different national colors. For interpreters, they require a higher level of translation skills than translators to handle these metaphors as they need to react immediately.

Therefore, in the following sections, metaphor translation of the political discourses is divided into two parts: 1) the strategies of the same metaphors; 2) different metaphors among the source text and the target text [6–8].

2.1 Different Metaphors in ST (Source Text) and TT (Target Text)

Conceptual metaphors have different meanings in various countries due to a variety of influences such as geography, national history, culture, and religious practices. Lin's paper argued that research in a database of Chinese and American countries showed that Chinese and American countries use metaphors including biology, journey, war, religion and other types of metaphors [9]. For the U.S., the religious metaphor is a unique metaphor. Schäffner proposes five basic cases of metaphorical translation through a comparative analysis of the originating and target languages, one of which is when the target and source languages are metaphorically inconsistent [10]. Newmark also suggests a translation strategy for this situation: converting the metaphor into a concrete meaning [11].

In the case of religious metaphors, which are unique to the United States, although the concept of religion also appears in Chinese history and culture, the fact that China

is a non-religious country requires translators to adopt appropriate translation strategies to deal with the metaphorical knowledge of religion. For example, the United States is a country with a large number of Christian believers, so politicians often use Christian words metaphorically and use the Bible to preach politics in order to inspire people and better penetrate political ideology. Here is an example using a quote from Trump's White House inauguration speech,

Example 1:

ST: "how good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity."

TT: "弟兄和睦同居, 是何等的善、何等的美。"

In China, the concept of God does not usually give a sense of what he actually means. If one were to choose the strategy of replacing the same image in the source language with a standard target language (Baker 2001), one might here translate "God" could be translated as "菩萨", which would be inappropriate. The translator, therefore, chooses here to omit him and express the meaning of the phrase clearly to convey what Trump is thinking here.

2.2 Same Metaphors in ST and TT

While the above reviews the different metaphorical developments in different countries, the same symbolic metaphors exist in different languages as well, due to the influence of dominant values, the constant exchange, and the integration of world cultural circles. Newmark also mentions the applicable strategy in his seven approaches to metaphorical translation: reproducing the same image in the target language [11]. When the same expression is found in both the source and target language, it can be translated by selecting words that have the same metaphorical meaning in them. Meanwhile, Wei also mentions in his study of metaphorical translation in political texts that if metaphors are perceived in the same way in both English and Chinese, and the imagery in the metaphor is used with equal frequency and stylistic extent in both Chinese and English, a direct translation approach can be adopted in the translation [7].

The following example is taken from Wang Yi's speech at the seminar on the international situation and Chinese diplomacy in 2020.

Example 2:

ST: "2020年是人类历史进程中具有分水岭意义的一年。"

TT: "The year 2020 is a watershed in human history."

As a type of ontological metaphor, "分水岭" has a symbolic meaning in both Chinese and English, and the concept expressed in politics is always the same. Thus, it was translated directly in this case.

3 Political Terms

Political terminology is also influenced by the political systems, ideologies, historical cultures, along with customs of different countries and regions. Therefore, when translating political terms, translators usually make a good choice in their translation strategy, because many political terms are new concepts for another country. As a bridge, translators must not only translate carefully to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings and

problems due to political sensitivity but also convey the attitude of the speaker and the political spirit and views of the country. Hao refers to the theory of adaptive selection on political terminology and argues that Darwin's theory of biological evolution can be drawn upon when making translations of terms. She also points out that translators need to fully understand the external environment when translating, and give full play to their subjective initiative in making choices to optimize the translated text [12].

3.1 Abbreviation

In Luo's article on the comparison and translation of Chinese-English abbreviations, it is mentioned that there are significant differences between Chinese and English abbreviations, pointing out that the different ways of abbreviating words in China and England cause different methods to be used in translation [13]. The lexicographer Kleinedler gives examples of three abbreviations in his dictionary [14]. For example, blends of Chinese abbreviations are broadly divided into three types: mention-word abbreviations, combined-word abbreviations, and marked-number abbreviations. The following is an analysis of the three aspects:

The mention-word abbreviations are more similar to the combined-word abbreviations. The reduction method is a way of extracting representative words from the original word and combining them to form a new word. For example, “科教 (Science and education)” is a contraction of “科学教育 (Science and Education)”. Conversely, two juxtaposed two-syllable words are abbreviated into a three-syllable word by combining the same word, without changing its meaning. For example, the words “进口” and “出口” become “进出口”. Translation involves the process by which the translator understands the original text and reproduces the target message. So when translators deal with the above two abbreviations they usually add the complete original words for translation.

Marked-number abbreviations are more common in political texts, especially in Chinese political texts where some strategic guidelines are often expressed in number abbreviations. Explication is defined by Baker as making the text's implicit information explicit [15]. Explication serves to better and more precisely communicate the original message.

Example 3:

ST: 严格落实中央八项规定精神, 持之以恒纠治“四风”, 进一步为基层减负。

TT: We strictly complied with the central Party leadership's eight-point decision on improving work conduct, kept up our efforts to tackle pointless formalities, bureaucratism, hedonism and extravagance, and took further steps to ease the burdens of those working on the ground.

As it can be seen above, the translator has translated the Four Winds into pointless formalities, bureaucratism, hedonism and extravagance to make it clearer.

3.2 Original Words

Language conversion will undoubtedly be impacted by thought differences. Chinese political discourse has created many unique terms and original words. If translators do not have transformation thinking, they will not be able to translate the original words in political terminology accurately.

For example, the phrase “要坚持“不打棍子, 不扣帽子, 不抓辫子” would be puzzling if translated directly:” we should insist on “not beating sticks, not withholding hats, not catching braids.” It does not convey the real political meaning. It is also a big taboo for political translators or interpreters in the political situation. Therefore, translators should choose a more appropriate translation strategy: meaningful translation. “It is necessary to adhere to the ideals of not condemning people without good reason, not labeling them, and not preying on their weakness,” is how it should be translated.

4 Cultural Sentences and Idioms

The Chinese culture has a long history, during which leadership (e.g., the previous Prime Minister Wen Jiabao) has always been fond of choosing culturally loaded sentences or idioms to spread Chinese ideas and make political speeches. Translation and interpretation have become effective means of spreading culture. The following article provides an overview of translation strategies regarding both culturally loaded sentences and idioms.

4.1 Ancient Poetry Sentences

Due to the constant flow of Chinese culture, both literary and vernacular languages are beneficial for the Chinese people to express themselves. The vernacular is concise and clear, while the literary language is equally straightforward and connotative. With the development of times, these two sessions have favored the use of ancient poetic phrases as part of political speeches, to express political ideas and aspirations through ancient poetic phrases which are rich in history and culture, thereby improving them to become more meaningful. In China, the translation of ancient poems has mainly been explored within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) theory. The SFL theory proposes that language has three meta-functions: Conceptual, Interpersonal, and Discourse functions [16]. Halliday was the first scholar in China to conduct such a study. In 2006, the other scholar Huang published *A Linguistic Exploration of Translation Research*, which contains all his applied research findings on the translation of ancient poems under the framework of SFL [17].

The issue of ‘formal equivalence’ has been much discussed by scholars in relation to the translation strategies of ancient poetry. While some scholars argue that the rhythmic beauty of poetry should be preserved, others claim that the primary principle of translating ancient poetry should be transmitted to its basic meaning as a literary translation [18].

The above debate also exists in political translations. For example, Wen Jiabao, the previous Prime Minister, evaluated his efforts by saying, “知我罪我, 惟其春秋 (They are people who will appreciate what have done. But there are also people who will criticize me. Ultimately, history will have the final say)” in response to inquiries from reporters during the two sessions. Spring and Autumn in this context do not mean the real seasons of spring and autumn, but one of the Four Books and Five Classics of ancient China, which for foreigners is a phenomenon of missing context in the translation of stories. He mentioned that cultural imagery is a prominent cultural phenomenon in ancient poetry that adds to the difficulty of cultural translation, resulting in the untranslatability of

ancient poetry [6]. The interpreter's approach to this line was to use a paraphrase to accurately convey the sense of the poem.

4.2 Idioms

Idioms, as cultural words with a strong historical and cultural meaning in Chinese civilization, are popular with political speakers and often used in political speeches because of their special four-character form and the ease, with which they can be understood by the general public. Similar to the ancient poems above, idioms often express rich meanings in a brief form. Hao cited Hu's ecological translation theory in Hao's study of idiom translation strategies for the Government Work Report from the perspective of translation adaptation selection theory and elaborates on the need to use the translation method of three-dimensional transformation when translating idioms [12, 19].

For example, in the government report, there is a sentence called “我们必须防微虑远, 趋利避害, 一定要牢牢把握发展的主动权 (We must address problems as they emerge, guard against latent problems, and keep the development initiative firmly in our hands),” where “防微虑远” and “趋利避害” are both idioms, but different translation strategies are used in the translation here. The translator translates these two idioms as “address problems as they emerge, guard against latent problems”, highlighting “防微虑远” and omitting the translation of “趋利避害”. Hereby, the translation strategy adopted by the translator is domestication, which is oriented toward the readers of the translated text. By adopting the translation technique of omission, certain words and phrases in the original text are omitted according to the needs of the genre to express the ideological content of the original work more concisely and smoothly. In most translations of idioms, translators tend to use the strategy of paraphrasing.

5 Conclusion

From the review of the current literature, it can be seen that first of all, for the analysis of metaphors in politics, scholars mostly start with the conceptual metaphors represented by the cognitive school. The analysis of conceptual metaphors is generally divided into two aspects: 1) the same as the source text; 2) different from the target text. If the metaphor in the target text is the same as that in the source text, the translation is generally corresponding (i.e., a direct translation). Conversely, metaphors that are different from the source text are usually translated in political translation with the strategy of paraphrasing. The second finding is the analysis of terminology, which mainly abbreviated terms and original terms. The main focus here is on how translators can properly deal with the Chinese to English translation process from the source text of Chinese. The final finding is the translation strategies of cultural sentences and idioms. To sum up, this review is dedicated to the strategies of metaphor, terminology and cultural sentence idioms in political translation. It is intended to help future generations of translators to reduce errors in political translation, as well as to assist translators and interpreters in their daily translation training. Finally, it is expected to be useful for future generations of scholars to sort out the relevant literature.

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