



Translation of Sci-Tech News from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

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Abstract

Sci-tech news contains many scientific and technological breakthroughs and achievements that keep pace with the times around the world. Whether it is to spread the latest scientific and technological achievements abroad or to understand emerging technologies outside the world, the translation of such news is an important bridge. Therefore, under the guidance of Skopos theory, this paper analyzes the characteristics of sci-tech news, discusses the common translation problems in this kind of translation and gives solutions, including the translation of terms, titles and leads in sci-tech news. It is also necessary for translators to pay attention to the firm political stance when translating.

Subject Areas

Language Education

Keywords

Sci-Tech News, Skopos Theory, Translation

1. Introduction

At present, China's international status is rising, and it has made great achievements in all aspects, especially in the field of science and technology, which has attracted the attention of major media around the world. Sci-tech news translation is an important carrier of science and technology knowledge dissemination in the international scope, and it is necessary for the development and progress of today's society [1]. In recent years, domestic and foreign media have gradually increased their coverage of this field. Through the translation of sci-tech news texts, China's scientific and technological capabilities can be shown to the world, not only that, but also can promote the spread of China's voice in the world, playing a very important role in external publicity. Therefore, it is essential to

translate the sci-tech news well. Sci-tech news has the function of introducing scientific and technological achievements and transmitting scientific and technological information, but at the same time, it is also characterized by a variety of professional terms, preciseness and objectivity. In order to attract readers' attention and fulfill the purpose of transmitting information, its title and lead should be simple and concise, and at the same time be interesting, which leads to great difficulties in translating. Therefore, this paper makes a macro analysis of the sci-tech news text, and gives some solutions to the extent.

The examples selected in this paper are from 1) Authoritative explanation from Baidu Baike; 2) reports from new media platforms such as <http://www.desn.com.cn/>; 3) translation authorities speak. Therefore, the materials are authoritative, which can not only ensure the authenticity of the language but also the professionalism of the text.

2. Introduction to Skopos Theory

2.1. The Development of Skopos Theory

The emergence of functional translation thought mainly went through three periods, and there appeared three representatives successively, namely the German translation theorists: Katharina Reiss, Hans J. Vermeer and Justa Holz Mantari. In 1971, in his book *Translation Criticism: The Potentials & Limitations*, Reiss clearly put forward the preliminary idea of functional theory for the first time [2]. The main contents of the theory include how to achieve equivalence between the target language and the source language in terms of the thought, the form of language and its communicative function [3]. Vermeer, a student of Reiss, further improved Reiss' idea in the 1970s by putting forward the Skopos theory and pointing out that translation should follow three laws: the law of purpose, the law of coherence and the law of fidelity. The Skopos theory advocated by Vermeer is the most important one in the functional school. On the basis of Vermeer's research, Mantari further expanded the scope of functional theory, focusing on three aspects: the behavior of translation activities, the roles of participants and the environment in the translation process [3].

2.2. The Three Laws of Skopos Theory

(1) The Law of Purpose

"Skopos theory states that translation is an activity. The purpose of translation determines the process of translation" [3]. Therefore, in the translation processing, the translator should determine the target text according to the translation purpose and the target audience.

(2) The Law of Coherence

"The coherence law refers to the requirement that a target text meet the criteria for intralingual coherence" [3]. In other words, readers of the target language can grasp the main content of the target text smoothly, so the target text can also play a certain role in the culture and communication process of the target lan-

guage.

(3) The Law of Fidelity

“The law of fidelity refers to the existence of interlingual coherence between the target text and the original text, that is, the target text should be faithful to the original text as much as possible, and the degree and form of fidelity are determined by the purpose of the target text and the translator’s understanding of the original text” [3].

“These three laws do not exist independently, but are interrelated. The functional school holds that the law of fidelity is subordinate to the law of coherence, which in turn is subordinate to the law of purpose” [4].

3. Definition and Characteristics of Sci-Tech News

Sci-tech translation refers to the translation in science and technology, so that to achieve the scientific communication. “It is a formal style, characterized by formal tone, concise vocabulary, rigorous syntax, good language logic, and more use of professional terms” [5]. News is “the reporting of recent facts” [6]. Its purpose is to attract readers’ attention and spread information. It belongs to an ordinary text, but its title, vocabulary and lead have distinct characteristics that distinguish it from other texts, namely novelty, vividness and compact [7]. The language of news is concise and clear, timely, and factual [8]. Sci-tech news is the “combination” of news and sci-tech translation, so it has the characteristics of both sci-tech translation and news translation.

Sci-tech news refers to “scientific and indicative reporting of recent developments in science and technology and related events.” Therefore, combined with the characteristics of sci-tech texts and news, the characteristics of sci-tech news can be summarized as objective, accurate, professional, logical, interesting and so on [6].

4. Translation Problems and Solutions of Sci-Tech News

4.1. Terminology

For sci-tech news texts, one of the key parts is the translation of terms, which should reflect the characteristics of sci-tech news, namely objectivity and accuracy. At the same time, considering the target readers, the translator should choose appropriate words. How to make the translation objective and accurate without bringing into the translator’s subjective emotion and personal factors requires the translator to have a full understanding of the content and background of the original text before translating these terms. For professional terms, it is necessary to check the dictionary, clarify the original meaning, and determine whether there is any extended meaning, that is, a term has passed through the changes of The Times, the meaning of it may also be expanded. Therefore, the translator should fully understand the current background and the extended meaning of the term before translating, otherwise it may cause the loss of information or the deviation of information transmission. If there are other extended

meanings, it is necessary to compare them with databases, term bases, etc., which is also a reflection of fidelity of skopos theory.

Example 1: “赛马”来源于海尔集团的用人理念。

V1: The theory of horse racing is developed from the concept of employing people in Haier Group.

V2: The theory of “horse race” management system is developed from the concept of employing people in Haier Group.

Analysis: In the past, the explanation of “赛马” on Baidu encyclopedia was a sport specializing in the competition of horse speed, and can also refer to horses specially bred and trained for speed competition. Therefore, when the translator sees “赛马” would mistranslated as “horse racing” if the translator does not think carefully and consider its extended meaning in combination with the background of The Times. Today, “赛马” has a new significance in the field of science and technology, the National Development and Reform Commission of the People’s Republic of China has made such an explanation of “赛马”, “赛马” is a new way of project organization, when the project is set up, a number of subjects are selected in parallel, then, phased assessment and competitive elimination are carried out in the process. It will help let good subjects with real ability stand out, improve the quality and efficiency of key research.” Therefore, when translated, according to the deep meaning expressed, “赛马” would be translated as “horserace’ management system”.

The reader should be taken into account when translating the term properly. After all, one of the important functions of news is to convey information. For professionals, they can have a good understanding of some professional terms, but for ordinary readers, if the translation is full of professional words and difficult to understand, it will cause certain obstacles to readers’ understanding of the news, which is not conducive to the transmission of information. For ordinary readers, addition or additional notes can be adopted, which could give further explanations on some professional terms.

Example 2: 羲和号卫星总重 508 千克。

V1: The total weight of the Xi He is 508 kilograms.

V2: The total weight of the Xi He (Chinese H-Alpha Solar Explorer) is 508 kilograms.

Analysis: “羲和号” is China’s first sci-tech experiment satellite for solar exploration. For the general reader, “羲和号” may not be as universal as terms like “天宫一号”, so when translating “羲和号” in the first time, in addition to translating it as “Xi He”, the translator can add “Chinese H-Alpha Solar Explorer” as an explanation, so that readers can understand the translation faster.

4.2. Title and Lead

Compared to other types of text, there is a special feature in sci-tech news text, which is the title and lead. “The title have three functions: (1) to refine the content, (2) to beautify the layout, and (3) to attract readers” [9].

First of all, the title should be concise when translating. On the premise of not

changing the meaning of the original text, the title can be determined by translation skills of omission and division. Therefore, the long sentence in the title can be changed into two short clauses, which can beautify the typesetting of news to a certain extent.

Example 3: 中国电动汽车之父着眼于下一场变革, 认为氢燃料是未来。

V1: With eyes on the next revolution, China's father of electric cars sees hydrogen as the future.

V2: Father of Chinese Electric Cars: Hydrogen is the Future [10].

Analysis: The V1 is literal translation. After the translation, the title becomes a long sentence, losing the simplicity that a title should have. Meanwhile, it is too long to attract readers' attention. The translation skill of omission is used in V2, only keep the key part of the original text "Father of Chinese Electric Cars.", "Hydrogen is the Future". As the title, the two small sentences are simple and concise, while not damaging the information conveyed by the original text, so that readers can quickly grasp the key information of the article.

In addition, to grab readers' attention, translation skills such as conversion or adjustment can be adopted to deal with the translation of title or lead. "The lead is a unique concept in news text, which generally refers to the first paragraph or the first sentence at the beginning of a report. The lead is also an extension of the title, speaking with facts" [9]. Therefore, when translating the lead, it is necessary to avoid using the same expression with the title. Also, the style should be objective and concise without using a large number of clauses or complex sentences, otherwise it may be difficult for readers to have the desire to read further so that it will fail to achieve the purpose of information transmission.

Example 4: 首次在活人肺部深处发现微塑料污染。

V1: It is the first time to find the microplastic pollution in the deep lungs of living people.

V2: Microplastic pollution has been discovered lodged deep in the lungs of living people for the first time [11].

There are three key points in this lead, which are "首次", "活人肺部深处" and "微塑料污染", and the most important one is "微塑料污染". Therefore, if it is literal translation according to the order of the original text as V1, the three information are in parallel, which does not highlighting the main information and is difficult to catch the reader's eye. In V2, the active voice is changed into passive voice. It adjusts the order of the three information, and puts "Microplastic pollution" at the beginning of the sentence, so that readers can grasp the most important information in the shortest time and they would desire to read further, which fully play the role of the lead.

4.3. Political Stance

"Political stance is also an important characteristic of international publicity translation. Maintaining China's good reputation and safeguarding national rights and interests are the central tasks of China's international publicity translation" [12]. At the same time, the readers of sci-tech news is not just from Chi-

na, but from the world, which aims to show China's achievements and contributions in the field of science and technology. Therefore, when translating sci-tech news, especially when the relevant content has a specific political attribute, the translator needs to pay high attention to reflect a firm political stance in the words and sentences, and avoid some words with cultural discrimination or derogatory color. Besides, the statement of the national achievements should not be too exaggerated, so as to avoid seeming arrogant.

Example 5: Mr. Chen Mingming, Executive Vice Chairman of Translators Association of China, said in an interview that “反对个人主义” has been translated as “oppose individualism” for many years. In fact, the meaning of individualism in China is totally different from that of individualism in Western culture. In China, individualism refers to all kinds of wrong thoughts or behaviors that put individual interests above collective interests or only care for one's own interests while ignoring the rights and interests of others. Such “individualism” runs counter to the collectivism advocated by China and should be strongly opposed. In Western culture, individualism is not an expression of derogation, rather, it is a core value concept. It advocates citizens to give full play to their self-worth, safeguard everyone's rights and interests and respect for individual freedom. Therefore, translators should not simply translate “个人主义” as “individualism”, otherwise, it may lead to misunderstandings of Western readers. Mr. Chen also mentioned that in the English version of the Report to the 19th CPC National Congress, the English translation of “个人主义” was defined as “self-centered behavior”, which clarified its true meaning in China [13].

5. Conclusion

This paper introduces the characteristics of sci-tech news text, and also makes a brief introduction to the development of Skopos theory and the three core principles. Under the guidance of Skopos theory, translators should pay attention to the following points in the translation of sci-tech news texts: (1) For the term translation, translators should keep up with the development of The Times. To determine the appropriate translation, translators should check the database and termbase, can take the translation skills of addition or translation annotation, and also should take the purpose of news and the target readers into consideration; (2) one of the purposes of news is to catch readers' eyes and spread information quickly. Translation skills such as conversion or adjustment can be adapted to translate titles and leads, which can show the features, interesting and concise, of titles and leads to some extent. But at the same time, one of the important features of sci-tech news text is to state objective facts, so it is necessary to avoid bringing too much personal emotion and other subjective factors into the translation; (3) when translating sci-tech news, the translator should maintain a correct political stance and be familiar with the cultural background between the two countries and some sentences with commendatory and derogatory meanings, so as to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings caused by improper

translation. Of course, the translation of sci-tech news is a complicated task, and this paper may not be comprehensive enough to focus on the above three points. In order to do a good job in the translation of sci-tech news, the translator needs to constantly learn the cultural background knowledge, and master the translation characteristics of the text, so as to constantly improve the translation quality.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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