



C-E Translation Strategies of Diplomatic Speech From the Perspective of Skopos Theory

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Abstract

As a necessary part of diplomatic activities, diplomatic speech not only shows the political policy of the speaker’s country, but also expresses their government’s attitude towards unilateral or multilateral relations. Therefore, there is no doubt that the C-E translation of diplomatic speech is significant. Under the guidance of Skopos theory and with the analysis of diplomatic speeches’ stylistic feature, this paper aims to figure out C-E Translation strategies of diplomatic speech by analyzing the speeches delivered by Xi Jinping from the lexical, syntactical, and discourse level.

Key words: Skopos theory; Diplomatic speech; Translation strategies

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INTRODUCTION

With the development of economic globalization, China is becoming more and more active on the arena of international politics. When communicating with other countries, the diplomatic speeches are definitely indispensable. As a result, the political leader of China has to represent his country and government to deliver

speeches in some diplomatic activities. However, as an important part of the diplomatic activities, the translation strategies of diplomatic speeches are still insufficient at home. Therefore, the research of the translation of diplomatic speeches is necessary and important. The paper aims to find out efficient and reasonable strategies of translating diplomatic speeches through analyzing the speeches delivered by Xi Jinping. All these speeches have unprecedented function in Chinese political life because they not only express China’s courage to take responsibility of a big county, but also show the government’s views about global development. Therefore, it is important to translate these speeches in a best way.

Unlike Western countries, the study of translation started late and developed slowly in China. As a result, the research of translation strategies concentrated on the linguistic level for a very long time until Skopos theory was introduced into China in the 1990s. From then on, the development of translation theory has made a qualitative leap. Skopos theory concentrates on the finding of the purpose of translation, ways of translation and the skills of translation, which makes up for the disadvantage of traditional theories (Nord,1991, p.103). At that time, Chinese scholars started to apply this theory in translation and translation criticism. Skopos theory has widely used in the study on the strategies of translation. Based on the fact that diplomatic speech is a kind of stylistics with a strong political purpose, Skopos theory is also good for the study of translation of diplomatic speeches.

1. THE THREE RULES OF SKOPOS THEORY

Skopos theory is a new translation theory model put forward by German translator Han J. Vermeer, and it claims that translation is a human being’s cross-cultural communication activity which focuses on the source texts, and it has a clear purpose and intention under the

effect of the translator. The basic rules of Skopos theory are: the Skopos rule, the coherence rule and the fidelity rule. Among these three rules, the Skopos rule plays an important role in the whole process of translation.

According to Skopos theory, the Skopos rule should be the guidance of all translation activities. In other words, translation is influenced by the expected function or the purpose of the translated text as influenced by the translation initiator instead of by the source text, or its impact on the source text receiver, or the function which the author assigns to it. That is, translation should meet the need of the target language readers with the consideration of the context and culture of the target language. There are three possible kinds of purpose in the field of translation: firstly, the general purpose that the translator wants to express during the translation process; secondly, the communicative purpose which is influenced by the target text under certain situation; last but not least, it is the purpose that is influenced by specific translation strategies or procedure (Zhang, 2003, pp.35-37).

As for the coherence rule, it reveals the fact that translation must take the intertextual coherence into account, that is, the relationship between the translated text and the culture of the target language. The translation should be legible and acceptable by giving the target receivers relevant background knowledge and situational circumstance, so that they can understand it and make it meaningful in the culture of the target language and the communicative context in which the translated text is used.

The fidelity rule refers to the fact that translators should clearly recognize the cultural differences and the relationship between the translator and the target receivers. And translators should also take some responsibilities for explaining the translation behavior adopted in the translation process. The fidelity rule requires translators to be faithful to the original text's author, they should properly reconcile the translation purpose with the real intention of the source text's author with their respect to the original author. Generally speaking, the fidelity rule emphasizes the correlation between the translator, the author of the source text and the translated text receiver.

2. THE STYLISTIC FEATURES OF DIPLOMATIC SPEECH

Diplomatic speech is normally delivered by a country's leader or its senior diplomat in some important diplomatic occasions, which presents a country's view or position on bilateral or international relations (Huang, 1985, p.28). According to Guo Hong and Peng Xiaodong's book *diplomatic English*, the purpose of delivering a diplomatic speech is that the speaker wants to make influence on the listeners' attitude and behavior by means of showing his official position and attitude on international affairs or those events which involve his own country's interests.

Therefore, the diplomatic speech has the conative function. In addition, it may use emotional words or figures of speech to get the audience's emotional response, so it also has emotional function and poetic function (Guo & Peng, 1999, p.106). Diplomatic speeches will be prepared in advance in most cases, so they may have some typical characters of written language. Firstly, the language is likely to be clear and fluent, and the long sentences are used with clear boundaries. Secondly, the wording is quite formal. For example, the speaker may show his respect to the listeners by greeting to them with some polite opening lines. Thirdly, metaphors, personifications, exaggerations, citations and other rhetorical devices are occasionally adopted to express emotions and to make speeches more appealing (Guo & Peng, 1999, pp.106-112).

On the other hand, diplomatic speech is a kind of written document formed by state leaders in diplomatic activities. Therefore, such kind of text belongs to foreign affairs translation and has its general characteristics: the text has strong political nature and high policy sensitivity; the text itself is clear, precise and avoiding obscurity; the text contains comprehensive knowledge and large cultural information.

To be specific, diplomatic speech have informative, expressive and evocative functions. As a whole, the aims of diplomatic speech translation are to communicate information, to highlight the effect of information transmission, and to take the conversion of language, style and form into consideration.

3. STRATEGIES ADOPTED IN TRANSLATING DIPLOMATIC SPEECH

Skopos theory considers that the whole process of translation is influenced by purpose (Venuti, 1992, p.20), it also holds that the concept of "Skopos" should be applied to the practice of translation activities. It is believed that all behaviors are closely related to the purpose. While translation is a kind of purposeful, cross-cultural and communicative activity, so translators should choose relevant translation strategies according to the purpose. At the beginning, translator must infer the specific purpose of different diplomatic speeches by combining the stylistic feature of diplomatic speeches with the communicative purpose of diplomatic activities. Through comprehensive analysis of the speeches delivered by Xi Jinping, it can be found that the communicative purpose of the source text is the same as the communicative purpose of the translated text. One is often related to some major stylistic features of diplomatic speeches; the other is referred to the specific purpose of government. Then, translator can choose suitable translation strategy to finish the translation task. Usually there are two strategies adopted in translation of diplomatic speeches. Domestication refers to the target-culture-oriented translation in which unusual expressions

to the target culture are exploited and turned into some familiar ones so as to make the translated text intelligible and easy for the target readers (Ma & Miao, 2009, p.192). Foreignization strategy is a source-culture-oriented translation which strives to preserve the foreign flavor as much as possible in order to transfer the source language and culture into the target one (Ma & Miao, 2009, p.192).

Under the guidance of Skopos theory, the following part mainly discusses which strategy is more suitable to C-E translation of diplomatic speeches by case analysis from the lexical level, syntactical level and discourse level.

3.1 Lexical Level

It is known that one of the diplomatic speeches' stylistic features is that its vocabulary is formal and the language is clear and precise.

Eg1

人类已经成为你中有我、我中有你的命运共同体。

Today, mankind has become a close-knit community of shared future.

From the perspective of Skopos theory, the Chinese leader wants to let all foreign members of the Forum realize that they have common future and their destiny is firmly united together. In Chinese culture, “你中有我” means a very closed relationship among people. If translator does not explain its specific meaning and just simply adopts foreignization strategy, it may be translated as “you and me” or “I have you”, and the translated text receiver will be confused about the meaning of the speech. As a result, they cannot get the speaker's real purpose and consequently the coherence rule will be broken. Therefore, in order to make sure that foreigners understand the importance of joining together to fight a bright future of human beings, the translator takes domestication strategy to translate this Chinese word into a compound adjective “close-knit”, which is clear and precise enough to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding.

Eg2

同舟共济，共度难关。

We should work hand in hand to fulfill our responsibility and overcome difficulty.

The translator hopes to show Chinese leader's sincere wish to appeal all members from the Forum to work together and take responsibility for the future difficulties of the development of economic globalization. In original text, the speaker uses a traditional Chinese four-character idiom “同舟共济”, which means when people are faced with trouble, they should unite as a whole to fight the enemy. This idiom reflects one of the features of diplomatic speech, that is, the speaker will occasionally use expression with cultural factor to arouse the emotion sympathy. Under the guidance of coherence rule, domestication strategy should be adopted here. The translator should tell the target language listeners the further meaning of this word so that the translated text is

more legible. Or it will cause culture difference and hard to understand by foreigner people.

3.2 Syntactical Level

As a kind of diplomatic document, diplomatic speeches tend to quote meaningful classical sayings to express the necessity or rationality of doing something.

Eg 3

坚持与时俱进，打造公正合理的治理模式。小智治事，大智治制。

We should develop a model of fair and equitable governance in keeping with the trend of the times. As the Chinese saying goes, people with petty shrewdness attend to trivial matters, while people with vision attend to governance of institutions.

An old Chinese saying is used to clearly show China's suggestion of how to promote the development of global governance. The Chinese character “治” means solve problems, the translator uses domestication strategy to translate it into “attend to”, which accords with the coherence rule of Skopos theory. On the other hand, “事” in Chinese saying means something unimportant, if literal translation is used, it will be translated as matters. For target language receiver, it will be difficult to understand the real meaning of this old saying because they do not have such cultural background. Therefore, the translator uses domestication strategy to translate it, which clearly shows the fact that all countries should distinguish what is the key of global affairs. In this way, the target language receiver will easily comprehend the translated text.

Eg 4

积力之所举，则无不胜也；众智之所为，则无不成也。

A Chinese adage reads, “Victory is ensured when people pool their strength; success is secured when people put their heads together.”

An old Chinese adage is used here to show China's strong appeal of asking members from all over the world to work together to against trade protectionism and provide better guidance to the process of globalization. In Chinese, this old saying means that if people unite themselves as a whole and work together, they can overcome any challenge and make success; if they put their idea and suggestion together, they can solve everything difficult. If translator takes foreignization strategy to translate this sentence, it will violate the coherent rule of Skopos theory and cause culture difference, and the target language receiver cannot understand the inner meaning of this adage. Therefore, domestication strategy should be adopted here. Only in this way can the target language receiver get the speaker's real intention, and devote themselves to solve the problem and promote the further development of the globalization.

3.3 Discourse Level

One of the most important stylistic features of diplomatic speech is its fluency. Therefore, in the process of

translation, coherence should be considered between sentences.

Eg 5

我们既要有分析问题的智慧，更要有采取行动的勇气。

We need to have the vision to dissect these problems; more importantly, we need to have the courage to take actions to address them.

In order to highlight the importance of the courage of taking measures to promote the global development, under the guidance of the fidelity rule, the translator takes the foreignization strategy to achieve it. The original text contains the progressive relationship between thinking and action, and points out the importance of taking action, so when translator or interpreter translates the speech, he or she should pay attention to the deep relationship of the whole discourse. As a result, the translator uses comparative structure to emphasize the importance of taking action. In this way, the target language receiver may easily get the key point of the speech. At the same time, the speaker's communicative purpose is also achieved.

Eg 6

再比如，国际金融危机也不是经济全球化发展的必然产物，而是金融资本过度逐利、金融监管严重缺失的结果。

The international financial crisis is another example. It is not an inevitable outcome of economic globalization; rather, it is the consequence of excessive chase of profit by financial capital and grave failure of financial regulation.

In order to demonstrate that the globalization has no business with the international crisis and points out the root cause, the translator adopts foreignization strategy to translate this part by revealing the progressive relationship hidden in Chinese language. In the target language community, many people blame the economic globalization as the reason of international financial crisis. In order to shake off their prejudice, the speaker struggle to reveal the hidden reason of financial crisis. Therefore, during the process of translation, translator should express the turning relationship of the discourse. As a result, the target language receiver may easily understand the speech. What's more, it follows the fidelity rule.

Eg 7

这是我们这个时代的领导者应有的担当，更是各国人民对我们的期待。

The people of all countries expect nothing less from us, and this is our unshakable responsibility as leaders of our times.

In the original discourse, the speech has provided several suggestions to solve the problems caused by globalization, and emphasizes other countries' responsibility of letting their people share the benefits of globalization. In the original text, the speaker wants to provide some effective suggestions to work out trouble all countries facing now, the real purpose of the speaker is

to let people from the world share the benefit brought by economic globalization. Therefore, the translator makes use of domestication strategy to make a conclusion, to argue that all leaders should take responsibility for the development of globalization. In the whole discourse, the word "this" is used to draw a good conclusion, which follows the coherence rule and makes the target language receivers easily understand the communicative purpose of the speech.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays, the increase of diplomatic activities makes an increase of diplomatic speeches. Therefore, a good C-E translation of diplomatic speech is necessary and demanding.

Skopos theory has meaningful and practical importance on guiding diplomatic speech translation. In some degree, it not only provides theoretical guidance for the translation of diplomatic speech, but also provides theoretical basis. Skopos theory essentially belongs to the external research of translation, so the key point of translation studies should transfer from the correlation between the translated text and the source text to expected effect of translation. This change has improved the deficiency of the traditional translation process, and has explored a new perspective for the translation research and development.

With the support of Skopos theory and the analysis of the stylistic features of diplomatic speeches, the translator can clearly infer the original text's purpose and transfer it to the target language receivers. From the perspective of Skopos theory, this paper finds out that domestication strategy is frequently adopted in translating political speech because political language is highly sensitive and extremely precise, translator can make use of domestication strategy to provide some background information for target language receivers, which makes them fully understand the communicative purpose of speech.

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