

Application of Narrative Theory in News Transediting: A Case Study of the International Political News in *Reference News*

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Abstract

Reference News is the only newspaper on the Chinese mainland that has the legal authority to publish foreign news directly, giving a transediting version of the latest news and comments around the world. Transediting, as a distinct type of translation, must not only faithfully convey the original content but also adapt the original structure in light of the international situation, to fulfill the needs of multiple parties. According to narrative theory, translation is re-narrative, and the original text's frame of time and space must be reconstructed, which coincides with the method required for transediting. In this paper, the author takes advantage of the narrative theory to analyze the transediting news of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in *Reference News*, conducting the transediting practice effectively.

Key words: Narrative Theory; News transediting; Framing Theory; *Reference News*

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the arrival of the information age, various media platforms have emerged and the way to access information has become increasingly diversified. The opinions on the

same event expressed by different social media frequently have a significant impact on the public's perception and even the trend of the event. The majority of international news which is available to the Chinese, is transedited and then presented in newspapers, magazines, televisions, and websites. In the context of globalization, news transediting has become an indispensable tool to learn about the world timely.

The recent conflict between Russia and Ukraine has aroused widespread concern among the media and the people, and the media coverage of the conflict varies greatly from country to country. This paper will analyze the application of narrative theory in news transediting by taking the Russia-Ukraine conflict on *Reference News* as an example, so as to explore the narrative framing strategies reflected in the transediting.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Previous Studies on News Transediting

News transediting, according to Li Qizhong, senior editor of the Xinhua News Agency, is primarily a means of news editing and translation, serving as translating and processing tools to translate the source texts into the targeted (Xu, 2022, p.65). Cheng Wei says, news transediting, like writing, is re-narrative in which the transeditor encodes the original news to different degrees under the effect of cognition and empathy (Cheng, 2013, p.101).

Different from conventional translation, news transediting is a unique translation process interspersed with editing, which means the restrictions of the content and structure in the source text can be modified to achieve communication effects.

2.2 Previous Studies on Mona Baker's Narrative Theory

Since Mona Baker put forward the narrative theory in her book, *Translation and Conflict: A narrative Account in*

2006, many scholars both domestically and internationally have been conducting research on this theory and putting it to use in practical analysis.

2.2.1 Previous Studies on Mona Baker's Narrative Theory Abroad

At the very beginning, most scholars tended to take advantage of the narrative theory to make some remarks and explain their research results they have made, rather than guiding practice. Sadeghi (2007) deems that translation is an act of 'interpretive dialogue' between the narrator and the translator, and marks the historical, sociocultural, and political contexts within which language is used to communicate meanings.

Later, some scholars started to pay attention to the practical application of Mona Baker's narrative theory in news translation. Pormouzeh (2014) considers that his study is an attempt to analyze narrative theory and apply the translation assessment model of narrative paradigm to Iran's translation of cultural and political narratives in western media and press from 2000 to 2012. Constantinou (2017) investigates how terror and terrorism are mediated through narratives of translation by Greek online newspapers.

2.2.2 Previous Studies on Mona Baker's Narrative at Home

Similar to the foreign scholars, at first, most Chinese scholars' research on narrative theory mainly involves the introduction and review. Shi Yonghao (2007) gives a brief introduction of the book and concludes the main features. Huang Haijun (2008) explains how Mona Baker used narrative theory to explore the role of translation in participating in and promoting narrative and discourse transmission through the framework.

Zhang Zhijuan (2016) holds that narrative theory provides a new theoretical perspective for news transediting. Luo Shujun and Liu Zhuyan (2021) insist that several framing strategies, such as selective appropriation, framing by labeling, and repositioning of participants, to make the news transediting in line with the expression habits of target readers.

In a word, although scholars at home and abroad have done a lot of research on narrative theory, and gradually integrate it with practice, putting forward new ideas for translation research in various fields. In news transediting, framing theory is closely connected with narrative theory, to make the target text more in line with the expression habit and cultural background. However, framing, as an important part of narrative theory, its research is still in its infancy, needing further study.

3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

3.1 Definition of Narrative Theory

Traditionally, the subject of the narrative is narrative texts, also called narrative fiction. However, the narrative

theory presented by Mona Baker, is based on the concept of narrative as applied in the fields of sociology and communication, rather than the conventional understanding of narrative or linguistics (Halimi, 2006). Narratives are not chronologies, not an undifferentiated list of happenings: they are stories that are temporally and causally constituted in such a way as to allow us to make moral decisions and act in the real world (Somers & Gibson, 2007, p.155).

Translation, according to Mona Baker, is both narrative and re-narrative. Through the efforts of transeditors, the narrative framing is diverted from its original goal, reconstructing the target language readers' comprehension or behavior (Baker, 2005).

3.2 Framing Strategies in Translation

Framing is defined differently in different academic fields. In the discipline of communication, 'framing' refers to the process of selecting and highlighting the fact, and making it more prominent, in order to guide the readers to make a judgment on the definition, causal interpretation, and morality (Entman, 1993). Baker provides a broad concept of 'framing' to clarify the relevant features of narrativity in the target context for renegotiation. And Tannen (Tannen, 1993, p.60) defines frame as 'a sense of what activity is being engaged in, how speakers mean what they say'.

Combined with Erving Goffman's framing theory, Mona Baker integrates narrative theory and translation studies, focusing on four main strategies: temporal and spatial framing, framing through selective appropriation, framing by labeling, and repositioning of participants (Shi Yonghao, 2007, p.44).

3.3 The Relationship between News Transediting and the Narrative Theory

According to Mona Baker's theory, translation may also be treated as a frame. Mona Baker uses the framing theory to explain the relationship between Narration and translation. According to the narrative theory, various strategies can be adopted to strengthen or weaken narration to make the target text deviate from the original. As a kind of re-narration, on the one hand, news transediting seeks to realize the transformation of language; On the other hand, from the national standing, it selectively selects the content that conforms to the value of their people and foreign policy, and omit or ignore those exaggerated and fake expressions. Therefore, we can use the framing strategies in narrative theory to analyze news transediting.

4. APPLICATION OF NARRATIVE THEORY TO NEWS TRANSEDITING

In this part, the news transediting of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in *Reference News* will be selected to analyze

the four major framing in narrative theory: temporal and spatial framing, framing through selective appropriation, framing by labeling, and repositioning of participants.

4.1 Temporal and Spatial Framing

Temporal and spatial framing entails adjusting the temporal sequence and reconstructing the frame of the original news. To make the transediting news logical and ensure timeliness, the content of the source text can be compressed or expanded. Therefore, the transeditors can lengthen or shorten a certain period of time as needed. But the reconstruction of time and space may break down the integrity and continuity of the news. However, 21st-century news consumers, according to Basnett, expect news to be brief and clear rather than confused and comprehensive (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2009). As a result, the methods of adjustment and reset can be utilized to reconstruct the temporal and spatial framing.

4.1.1 Inversion

Example 1

ST: The test launch of the Sarmat missile comes amid soaring tensions...Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said that Russia had given the U.S. an advance notice about the launch in line with the New START nuclear arms control treaty between Moscow and Washington. (MOSCOW (AP), April)

TT: 当地时间20日, 美国五角大楼发言人约翰·柯比说.....提前通知了美方.....报道称, 俄方试射该导弹的背景是其与西方的紧张关系因乌克兰局势不断加剧, 此次试射凸显克里姆林宫对俄核力量的着重强调。(Reference News, April 21, 2022)

The transediting version presents a chronological narrative of the Russian ICBM launch, the background as well as the US perspective of the launch, based on the original AP news coverage. The majority of the AP's readers are Americans, thus the narrative is primarily written from the American perspective and closely related to American interests. In this event, American readers are concerned about Russia's behavior and attitude, and thus evaluate whether it will have an influence on the US. Whether Russia is unleashing the missile as a message to Ukraine and the West, or just to boost its military power, especially during the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

However, for Chinese readers, the foregoing information is insufficient. On the one hand, the original text is descriptive of the process of the launch, making it difficult for Chinese readers to understand the main body; on the other hand, Chinese readers are more interested in US actions and attitudes than Russia. While transediting, the temporal structure of the original text is broken, emphasizing the United States' stand on the ICBM launch rather than the brief description of the process. The transediting version assists the readers not only in grasping the key of the events, but also in establishing a logical connection between them by re-framing the temporal elements. Reasonably adjusting the

chronological order does not contradict the principles of objectivity in news and fidelity in translation, but it does more effectively realize the communication effect of the news.

4.1.2 Omission

Example 2

ST: But some military and technology analysts worry that the strategy could backfire, inflaming anger over a shock campaign directed at mothers who may be thousands of miles from the drivers of the Kremlin's war machine. (*The Washington Post*, April, 15)

TT: 但一些军事和技术分析人士担心, 这一策略可能会适得其反, 激起人们对一场针对死者母亲的心理打击行动的愤慨。(Reference News, April 17, 2022)

The sentence 'who may be thousands...war machine' is omitted in the transediting version, but the main idea is expressed faithfully. There are two reasons for the omission. Firstly, the authenticity of the clause must be verified, as the distance between the family and the soldier is true 'thousands of miles'. Secondly, the main body in the original text is 'the strategy could backfire', as there is no logical connection between the spatial location of the family members. However, it appears to be insufficient in terms of emotional expression, since 'mothers...war machine' would exacerbate the reader's sadness: soldiers are separated from their families, which emphasizes the brutality of conflict while also evoking empathy in the readers.

4.2 Framing Through Selective Appropriation

Highlighting or ignoring particular parts of the original narrative text by omission, augmentation, or other means is known as framing through selective appropriation. Cultural difference, economic development, political stand, religion as well as the habit of expression are all aspects that must be taken into consideration when reconstructing. If a transeditor falls into the 'trap' set by Western media, he or she will not only express wrong ideas and have a harmful impact on international relations, politics, and the economy.

4.2.1 Addition

Example 3

ST: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky told CNN that Ukraine is not willing to give up territory in the eastern part of the country to end the war with Russia, and Ukraine's military is prepared to fight Moscow's military in the Donbas region in a battle he says could influence the course of the entire war. (CNN, April, 17)

TT: 据美国有线电视新闻网消息, 乌克兰总统泽连斯基在位于基辅的总统办公室接受专访时称, 乌克兰不会为结束俄乌战争而放弃乌东部领土。泽连斯基称, 乌军已经做好在顿巴斯地区与俄军作战的准备, 顿巴斯地区的战斗或将影响整场战争的走向。报道注意到, 俄罗斯对乌克兰展开的特别军事行动已经持续七周以上。(Reference News, April 18, 2022)

Transediting not only stands for the transformation from one language to another language in linguistic, but also for political and economic transformation, requiring re-narrative. At the end, ‘俄罗斯对乌克兰展开的特别军事行动已经持续七周以上’ is added to emphasize the duration of the military operation and providing readers with relevant background information. In addition, it describes the Russia-Ukraine conflict as a ‘special military operation’, which contrasts with ‘war’ in the west, showing the positions of different countries on this event and making it more descriptive for the targeted readers by adding more information.

4.2.2 Deletion

Example 4

ST: The Ukrainians champion the use of face-scanning software from the U.S. tech firm Clearview AI as a brutal but effective way to stir up dissent inside Russia, discourage other fighters and hasten an end to a devastating war. (*The Washington Post*, April, 15)

TT: 报道指出, 乌克兰人支持使用美国“清晰视野”人工智能公司的面部扫描软件, 将其作为一种残忍的方式, 试图打消俄其他作战人员的积极性。(*Reference News*, April 17, 2022)

It is well-known that the social media is the product of a certain culture, and some events are exaggerated or even fake, undermining the validity for diversified purposes. However, it is critical to delete these fake expressions in the transediting version to avoid transferring wrong value or opinions to targeted readers. In this piece of news, the statement ‘but effective technique to stir up unrest inside Russia’ belongs to fake news. ‘The scanning technology is brutal’ is true, but whether it can ‘stir up dissent inside Russia’ remains to be checked repeatedly. The original author overstated this, and thus it must be eliminated while translating into Chinese to ensure the accuracy and readability of the news.

4.3 Framing by Labeling

Actually, framing by labeling is a discursive process that involves the different applications of words, terms, or phrases to distinguish between individuals, time, and place in the original and target narratives. The various names for the narrative elements are not just related to the quality of the produced news, but also the political stand and personal values. Therefore, by changing particular words, the goal of re-narrative or stressing the narrative subject can be realized. ‘The definition of framing by labeling is, the use of words, terminology, or phrases to identify persons, places, groups, time, and other crucial parts of the narrative’ (Baker, 2019, p.122).

4.3.1 Culture-Loaded Words as a Labeling Device

Example 5

ST: Tank will fight tank in the brutal battle for the Donbas. (*The Sunday Times*, April, 17)

TT: 英媒文章: 顿巴斯或爆发俄乌坦克大战 (*Reference News*, April 19, 2022)

The Donbass, located on the west bank of the lower Don River in eastern Ukraine, is around 60,000 square kilometers and has a vital position in the conflict. It is easy for Western readers to conceive of its geographical location and strategic importance, but it is not belong to Chinese readers’ cultural background. To fulfill the reading needs of Chinese readers and improve the readability of the translated text, the background information must be added: the parties of the conflict. Furthermore, the subjective word “brutal” is removed. The material that the author has searched on the internet demonstrates that the tank war had not yet erupted, and the so-called ‘brutal’ was merely the subjective imagination. Such subjective speculation must be avoided for accuracy.

4.3.2 Commendatory and Derogatory Words as a Labeling Device

Example 6

ST: How Does the Russia-Ukraine War Affect Asia’s Political Economy? (*The Diplomat*, April, 18)

TT: 专家文章: 俄乌战事加速全球政经格局调整 (*Reference News*, April 22, 2022)

‘Affect’ is negative in English rather than positive in most time. The original title already suggests that the Russia-Ukraine conflict will have a detrimental impact on Asia’s political economy. The impact of the conflict on the world is, however, greater than that on Asia, given the current global situation. The Russia-Ukraine conflict will, to some extent, counter hegemony and power politics in the west, which will benefit the global political and economic situation rather than damage it. We must not fall into the trap of the Western media, which is guided by ideology and uses imprecise expressions to implicitly condemn and satirize. The title often leads readers to create narrative expectations, so it is not proper to follow the original title and translate from word to word.

4.4 Reposition in Paratextual Commentary

While transediting, two extreme strategies may be utilized. One is to deliver 100% of the information, which may result in the retention of prejudiced terms or idioms in the original text that is incompatible in culture. We call it ‘overforeignization’, which not only confuses the target readers but also conveys the wrong values. The other is to abandon the subject and theme of the original text in favor of a localized translation strategy. It will make the text diverge from the content, resulting in ‘overdomestication’, deviating from the faithfulness as well as amplifying cultural differences.

Mona Baker points out that participants’ position can be altered by the flexible use of time, space, instructions, dialects, registers, and other linguistic techniques for identifying self and others (Baker, 2005, p.132). The shift in position will affect both the current and higher-level narratives, which requires making tiny changes to the content. In this way, the difference between the ‘original narrator’ and the ‘re-narrator’ is clarified.

Example 7

ST: How Does the Russia-Ukraine War Affect Asia's Political Economy? (*The Diplomat*, April, 18)

TT: 专家文章: 俄乌战事加速全球政经格局调整.

核心提示: 文章称, 随着西方对俄实施越来越多的制裁, 许多不是美国坚定伙伴的国家现在更加意识到在经济上与美国及其盟友捆绑在一起的危险。(Reference News, April 22, 2022)

The prelude does not occur in the original text, but it is added at the beginning of the transediting version to offer essential background information for the readers, reducing the reading burden and increasing the readability. By providing background information, readers will establish appropriate values about the event and avoid falling into the cultural trap weaved by the West. Not only can such a preface reconstruct the relationship between the original author and the transeditor, as well as the transeditor and the reader, without affecting the overall content of the original text, but it can also reconstruct the narrative frame in accordance with the target expression habits and cultural background.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on Mona Baker's narrative theory, this paper analyzes the transediting of the international news on the Russia-Ukraine conflict from four aspects in Narrative theory: temporal and spatial framing, framing through selective appropriation, framing by labelling, and repositioning of participants.

When the temporal and spatial order of the source text is improper, the translation method of inversion or omission can be adopted to reconstruct the logical framework. Selective construction can be achieved by adding and deleting. When the information of the source text is insufficient, the transeditors can choose to add some background information to facilitate the reader's understanding. When the information is exaggerated, the transeditors can choose to delete it and filter out the false information. Framing by labeling devices, such as culture-loaded words, commendatory and derogatory words, are used to influence readers' interpretations on narratives.

In conclusion, in the process of re-framing, transeditors need not only to abide by the basic principles of news, but also to take into account the cultural and social needs of the targeted language. However, the above-mentioned is only a part of the application of framing theory in narrative theory, and researchers still need to conduct in-depth analysis and research.

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