

A Comparison of an English Editorial and Its Chinese Translation from the Perspective of Ideology

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Abstract

The paper makes a discussion on editorial translation from the perspective of ideology. It focuses on exploring the relationship between editorial translation and ideology and the appropriate translation methods. Analysis is carried out by studying samples excerpted from an American media and its translated version taken from a Chinese newspaper. It is demonstrated through the study that editorial translation is influenced by the ideology of patrons. Patrons can decide the translation techniques used as well as the selection of source texts in accordance with the ideological stance of the patrons involved in the translation.

Keywords: ideology, editorial translation, patron, translation technique

1. Introduction

A newspaper editorial is an article that gives the publication's position on current events. It may criticize, praise, or merely discuss the actions of some public official or group. Many editorials take political positions. It often encourages actions that the editors think will serve the interest of certain community. For this reason, editorial is perceived as a sensitive text type that is ideology-loaded.

When the ideological charge of source text varies from that of the patron of the translation, it would need some adjustments during the process of translation to make sure that the ideology presented in the translated version would be in line with that carried in the target culture. Such modifications are also done with the intention of influencing readers' understanding of the culture reflected by the source text. However, a very popular translation approach is descriptive translation, focusing on textual forms. It fails to address the influence of ideology. This study examines the effect of ideology on the translation of an editorial from English to Chinese.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Ideology and Translation

Translation can be seen as an activity that takes place not in an ideal neutral site but in real social and political contexts, and all the parties involved are interested in the production and reception of texts across languages and cultures. Translation is not simply a process of faithful reproduction but invariably involves deliberate acts of selection, constricting, and omission. It is inevitably linked to issues of cultural dominance, assertion, and resistance-in short, power. Ideology influences could be found in both process and product of translation.

Ideological aspects can also be examined in the process of text production and the role of the translator as a target text producer as well as a source text interpreter.

2.2 Translation as Rewriting

The function of translation is the rewriting of foreign text into domestic culture, in compliance with the domestic cultural norms and resources that make up the overall system of the society.

The idea of translation as rewriting was developed by Andrew Lefevere who worked originally from within systems theory. It means that any text produced on the basis of another has the intention of adapting that other text to a certain ideology or to a certain poetics, and usually to both. (Hermans, 1999, p. 127)

Lefevere claims that "Translation is the most obviously recognizable type of rewriting, and it is potentially the most influential because it is able to project the image of an author and/or those works beyond the boundaries of

their culture of origin.” (Lefevere, 1999, p. 12)

The literary system of which translation is a part is controlled by three main factors: professionals within the literary system; patronage outside the literary system; and the dominant poetics (Li, Huang, & Bo, 2005). By “patronage”, Lefevere means “any kinds of force that can be influential in encouraging and propagating, but also in discouraging, censoring and destroying works of literature.” (Gentzler, 2004, p. 137)

In the case of editorial translation, the power of the patron is decisive, since it can decide what gets translated and how it gets translated (as well as what is omitted, added, altered, etc.). In this case, translation is not a literary endeavor but a communicative one, a social activity. It reflects the power relation between the various elements involved in it. During the process of translation, language is interpreted in such a way to fit a certain point of view, and the translator’s ideologically motivated choices reshape the text to meet the patron’s needs which might be the same with that of the translator’s).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Theoretical Framework

This study will be done under the framework of Fairclough’s (1992) three-dimensional model of discourse. According to Fairclough (1992), discourse analysis combines, to some degree, the study of a text in the linguistic level and sociocultural level. Thus, data analysis of this study starts from the identification of the converting of words and sentences in translation, and then moves to the study of the ideological guidelines working behind such changes. Through this analysis, this study attempts to answer one research question: How does ideology influence the Chinese translation of English editorials?

3.2 Sample Collection

The two samples studied in this paper are extracted from an English and a Chinese newspaper. The English editorial, named “China’s Banner Year Felt Abroad”, is retrieved from The Christian Science Monitor, while the Chinese translation, entitled “中国外交师处‘软力量’”, is collected from an authoritative source of Chinese media-Global Times.

The Christian Science Monitor is an American international newspaper published daily. Despite the name, it reports on current events around the world, rather than religious events. The content of this paper mainly covers international and American news. In comparison to other American newspapers, it generally takes an optimistic view to national and international events.

The translation of this editorial is collected from Global Times, a daily newspaper sponsored by People’s Daily, a mouthpiece of the Chinese government. It mainly devotes to international news. This paper’s stance is in line with that of the Chinese government’s and the dominant moral requirements of Chinese society.

A comparative study will be conducted between the English editorial and its Chinese translation. The analysis will start with a comparative study of the two countries’ ideologies concerning the issue reported in the editorial. It will lay a ground for the understanding of the source and target texts.

4. Sample Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Ideology Discussion

“China’s Banner Year Felt Abroad” is an editorial published in 2004 on The Christian Science Monitor. It mainly comments on China’s increasing influence on the other countries and forecasted its future development. Looking from an ideological perspective, the source text intends to exaggerate China’s influence on the world and thereby advocates China’s threat to the world.

In 2005, Pentagon submitted an annual report to American congress, warning that China’s modernizing military could threaten US and other armed forces in the Asia-Pacific region.

The US report said China was “the third largest defense spender in the world after the US and Russia” and its military modernization “has increased the need for countermeasures that would enable Taiwan to avoid being quickly overwhelmed.”

In addition to the report, time and time again, phrases like a “rising power,” “growing threat” and “emerging superpower” were repeated so often when referring to China in medias of the United States that most Americans see China as a threatening military power and potential enemy.

The intention of America in spreading “China Threat Theory” is that America mistrusts China as a non-democratic and repressive state, and takes it as a way to justify a large U.S. military establishment. What’s more, American politicians also fear the effects of China’s potent economic success.

America's behavior rightly mirrors its ideological stance of superiority. It does not tolerate any country which might have some potential threat to its authoritative position in the international arena.

On the other hand, the Chinese side remarks that the notion of "China Threat" is absurd. According to a senior official of China, the increased defense spending has mainly been used to improve living conditions for soldiers and officers of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The PLA, with the help of other countries, upgraded some weapons in order to "deal with the complicated international situation, safeguard national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity". This is the right of China as a sovereign country, and other nations do not have the right to intervene. The military exchanges between China and other countries do not target at any third country. China would stick to a foreign policy of peaceful coexistence and independent sovereignty.

Though bloomed in 2005, the "China Threat Theory" had had its prelude one year ago. So in 2004, China did anything possible to prevent America's deception from prevailing. However, much as it advocates China as a military rival, U.S. reports on China, in a way, publicized China's latest success in developing its military force, economy, diplomatic relations and so on, therefore, the translation of this English editorial is of merit to the Chinese government in creating a positive image of China.

4.2 Sample Analysis

When translated, the title of this editorial is changed, due to the working of the dominant patron—the Chinese government—into "中国外交使出'软实力'" (China resorts to its "soft power" to communicate with the world). The rewriting of the headline of the source text shows that Chinese press intends to make "soft power" the focus of the translated editorial so as to attract Chinese readers' attention to what "soft power" means. This also coincides with the media's stance as to attract more readers' attention.

Taking a brief look at this sample, it can be easily noticed that the Chinese version is much shorter than the source text, in that a couple of sentences and paragraphs are left out, such as paragraphs 11, 12, 13 and 15, sentences ⑦, while others are combined, such as paragraph 1 and 2, 3 and 4, 8 and 9. But this situation does not limit to sentences and paragraphs. There are also words and phrases being omitted. The words and phrases "weary tone", "a banner year for Chinese diplomacy and strategy", "54-float", "the longest dragon", "experts", "envy", "Asian backyard", "Whether to assert its ancient role as the center of gravity in Asia", "from Chinese competition", "tributary appeasement" and "at a politically unaffiliated Asian think tank" are deleted by the translator.

The translator omits paragraphs 11, 12, 13 and 15 of the source text not because the space for translation is limited, but because Robert Marguand, the original writer, writes in an anti-Communist tone that is born with the western capitalist ideology. The ideology revealed in the four paragraphs indicates the writer's negative attitude toward China and therefore clashes with Chinese government's will. The words and phrases are omitted for the same reason. For example, "hierarchical authoritarian" in paragraph 12, "regime" in paragraph 13 and "percolating" in paragraph 14 all carry a derogatory meaning in the context. "Hierarchical" and "authoritarian", as two pre-modifications for "political structure", suggest that China is a country without democracy which is in sharp contrast to the real fact and is opposed to Chinese government's publicity principle, thus deleted.

The translator combines six paragraphs following the "parataxis" character of Chinese, because ideology is not only political, but also cultural. The difference in cultural values also results in different thinking patterns of China and the western cultures, which may lead to the change of the discourse structures in the target text.

In the translated version, the second paragraph of the source text is cut out so that the readers of the Chinese version will focus on "soft power". More words and phrases are omitted due to different reasons. "The longest dragon" in paragraph 3 is used to give more cultural implication to the English readers. The deletion does not affect Chinese readers' understanding at all. "Asian backyard" and "One of China's most successful moments" are very ambiguous about the image of China, thus are deleted to establish the proper position of China in Asia among the Chinese readers according to the CPC and government policy. The deletion of "experts" in paragraph 4 does not impact the authority and power of the two main motives of the blowout French "Year of China". The "54-float", as the trivial details in paragraph 3, is also cut out.

The words "from Chinese competition", "tributary appeasement" and "envy" and sentence ⑦ are of great reporter's negative emotion towards China's growing power, which is against China's publicity policy to emphasize a peaceful rising of China. So they are either deleted or rewritten during translation. "Percolating" is converted into "继续上升" (constantly increasing), to weaken its original derogatory emotion. Out of the same reason, the last part of paragraph 1 and the beginning of paragraph 2 are rewritten into "中国像坐过山车一样驶过农历羊年, 又迎来盼望已久的猴年。" (Chinese people said goodbye to the roller coaster year of the sheep,

and then welcomed the long-awaited year of the monkey.)

5. Conclusion

This study has made an investigation of the influential force of ideology in the translation of one English editorial. It finds out that in the case of this English-Chinese translation done by a Chinese state media, not only language but also ideologies hidden between the lines were shifted. In other words, the translation took place under the control of ideology. The intrinsic close relationship between editorial and power determines that editorial translation is destined to be influenced by ideology.

Ideologies vary from culture to culture. For example, whether Dalai Lama is called a “spiritual leader” or “demon”, the Tibetans disturbing the 2008 Olympic torch relay “protestors for freedom” or “anti-government riot” is a choice that depends on ideological position. Therefore, translation must be done with translator’s constant awareness of potential ideological transformations. In other words, a good understanding of the culture and ideology involved is a pre-requirement that must be met before translation.

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Appendix A

Sample Editorials

China’s Banner Year Felt Abroad

by Robert Marguand

“The soft power attractiveness of China cannot help but change the world, especially in Asia.”

—Edward Friedman

(1) Beijing-After ①a roller coaster year of SARS, new leadership, 9 percent growth, and the first Chinese astronaut in orbit, ②there is a slightly weary tone in Beijing as the country settles into a much desired Chinese Spring holiday kicking off the new “Year of the Monkey.”

(2) Yet for Beijing the old “Year of the Sheep” was ③a banner year for Chinese diplomacy and strategy. It has been marked by a steady expansion in Asia and abroad not only of economic clout, but of something akin to “soft power”,—a concept often associated with the US superpower’s influence, due to its size, culture, and other nonmilitary verities.

(3) Take the unprecedented reception granted this week in Paris to China’s top leader, Hu Jintao. The Eiffel tower is lit a flaming red at night, and the famed Champs-Élysées was the site of a ④54-float China paraded by ⑤the longest dragon in the world. It was the first time the French have given over their two best known venues to honor another single state.

(4) The blowout French “Year of China” probably has two main motives, ⑥experts say: It acknowledges China’s potential as a center of international trade, and the European interest in good ties with Beijing. And during a year of French frustration with the US and its Iraq foray, “making nice” with China also tweaks the often ambiguous US-China ties.

(5) But it is not just the French that are currently ga-ga over things Chinese. Much of the corridor talk at the Davos Economic Forum in Switzerland this week focused on China’s global economic dynamics—its currency valuation, cheap labor, \$50 billion in foreign investment, possible overheating, and purchase of Treasury bonds as a stabilizer of US deficit spending.

(6) “The soft power attractiveness of China cannot help but change the world, especially in Asia,” says Edward Friedman, a China specialist at the University of Wisconsin. ⑦He points out that China has grown since the late 70s at 7 percent or higher, so that “by 2004 China was the buzz word at the Davos Forum. Even more is China the focus of concern and envy in Asia.”

(7) Indeed, Beijing has made the clearest strides in its own. ⑧Asian backyard with a foreign policy it calls “more confidence, greater cooperation.” ⑨Whether to assert its ancient role as the center of gravity in Asia, or to create greater “stability” on its borders, or to counter fear of a nascent US “containment” strategy of China, Beijing has moved adroitly on nearly every part of the Asian chessboard to improve relations. The resulting pro-China “buzz” is particularly strong in Southeast Asia where China has long been a competitor with Japan. China’s next moves on the testy arrears of North Korea and Taiwan are unknown.

(8)⑩One of China’s most successful moments came last fall at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Bangkok. Hu Jintao’s message of Asian solidarity and Chinese investment in the region was seen as upstaging both the Japanese head of state, and the American president’s message of antiterror.

(9) China’s promise of continued investment in Southeast Asian nations takes some of the sting out of the region’s loss of job from Chinese competition. How long this tributary appeasement will last is an open question. Still, Beijing’s call for a free-market zone in Asia by 2010 caught the Japanese so off-guard that they immediately held their first ASEAN minisummit early in December in Tokyo to create their own new bilateral free trade ties.

(10) Soft power as applied to China does not imply exactly what it does in the American case. The term originated in the waning years of the cold war to describe how Western films, celebrities, clothing styles, and other popular culture influenced the opinions and aspirations of people around the world. In the case of China, soft power tends to suggest more a respect of or fascination with China’s recent success—and an accrual of clout as a result.

(11) With the exception of authoritarian or communist states like Burma or Vietnam, however, few experts feel Asian states are trying to emulate Beijing. And China is not yet regarded as a dynamo of popular commercial styles. Beijing doesn’t export boy bands, for example.

(12) Chinese leaders currently seek to meld China’s national identity and its ancient traditions with its hierarchical authoritarian political structure and economic successes as a way to create pride and legitimacy, experts point out.

(13) “The [Communist] regime in Beijing is legitimized, in part, by foreigners looking to China for lessons about the future. This trend should continue for the foreseeable future,” argues Mr. Friedman.

(14) Yet as a diplomatic “soft power” in Asia, the past year also recoded China’s joint Coast Guard exercises with India, something inconceivable five years ago, Beijing took a central role on the Korean nuclear crisis, even referring to the “six party talks” as the “Beijing process”. It has just finished a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization—designed to keep its influence percolating in Central Asia.

(15) The exercise of soft power was evident when Korean President Roh Moo Hyun visited Beijing last year. Mr. Roh, whose small state represents the world’s 11th largest economy, brought with him a vision of South Korea as the future “hub” of Asia trade and culture, a vision Roh gets great affirmation for at home. Yet in Beijing, Roh was politely hear out, then found himself treated to a different vision. “The Chinese basically said, ‘So you are the hub? Excuse us, we are the Middle Kingdom,’” said a source close to the meeting.

(16) “China is being a very reasonable power in Asia as a short and midterm strategy,” says one analyst at a politically unaffiliated Asian think tank. “What happens in 10 or 20 years, if China dominates the region, I don’t know. The best you can say is, ‘the jury is out.’”

(The Christian Science Monitor January 27, 2004)

Translated version

中国外交使出“软力量”

Translated by Cui Yan

(1)经历了非典疫情、新领导人上台，9%的经济增长以及第一名宇航员进入太空等一系列大事，中国像坐过山车一样驶过农历羊年，又迎来盼望已久的猴年。中国在亚洲地区稳定而广泛地扩大着自己的影响，不仅是在经济上，而且还包括一些类似于“软力量”的方面——这个概念通常会与美国这个超级大国所施展的文化和非军事影响联系在一起。

(2)1月26日，中国最高领导人胡锦涛开始了对法国的访问，巴黎空前的欢迎仪式，夜间的埃菲尔铁塔亮着红灯，著名的香榭丽舍大道成了花车游行的场所。这也是法国人为了显示对另一个国家的尊重，头一次把自己最著名的大街让给了别人。法国推出“中国年”可能出于两个目的：一是承认中国作为国际贸易中心的潜在能力，欧洲的利益与北京息息相关；二是在因伊拉克战争而与美国交恶的一年中，与中国“热恋”又可以模糊美中之间经常出现的友好关系。

(3)不过，目前并不是只有法国在跟中国“谈情说爱”。在刚刚于瑞士达沃斯结束的国际经济论坛年会上，各国代表在各种场合所谈论的话题也都围绕着中国的全球经济动力学，其中包括人民币的币值、廉价的劳动力、500亿美元的外国投资、可能会出现经济过热以及为了平衡美国赤字而购买的财政债券等。美国威斯康新大学中国问题专家爱德华·弗雷德曼说：“中国软力量改变了整个世界，尤其是亚洲。”

(4)的确，中国实行的“更加自信，更广泛合作”的外交政策，已使其在亚洲地区迈出了更清晰的步伐。尽管中国提出要创造更稳定的边界，并担心美国的“围堵政策”但在它的亚洲棋盘上，北京已敏捷地走好了每一步与临国改善关系的棋子。这也是支持北京的声音越来越强大的主要原因，尤其是在中日长期竞争的东南亚地区。但中国在敏感的朝鲜问题和台湾问题上将采取什么步骤，却让人摸不着头脑。

(5)去年秋天，亚太经济合作组织领导人会议在曼谷举行。中国国家主席胡锦涛向亚洲地区传递的团结信息，使其风头盖过了自负的日本领导人和只强调反恐的美国总统。此外，中国承诺继续在东南亚国家扩大投资，以解决这些地区的大量失业问题，但这步缓和的棋子到底还能走多久，也是一个公开的疑问。此外，北京提出2010年在亚洲建立自由贸易区后，日本提高了警觉不敢怠慢，立即于去年12月在东京举行了东盟会议，以建立新的双边自由贸易关系。

(6)不过，中国的“软力量”与美国的“软力量”完全不同。当年在冷战期间，美国利用西方电影、名人、时装和其它流行方式，影响全世界人民的价值观；但中国实施“软力量”目的在于寻求更多的尊重，其基础是中国近年来在经济发展中所取得的成就。

(7)值得注意的是，虽然在过去一年里，中国在外交上实施了“软力量”，但它还是与印度举行了海上联合军事演习，这在5年前几乎是难以想象的。在朝鲜核危机问题上，中国采取了中间路线，促成六方会谈；而上海合作组织也举行了会议，使中国在中亚的影响力继续上升。一名分析家指出，在短期和中期战略上，中国已成为亚洲地区非常负责任的大国，但再过10年或20年，如果中国真的统治了这个地区，谁都无法预料将会发生什么。

(环球时报 February 4, 2004)

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