

A Corpus-based Cognitive Study on the C-E Translation of Chinese Political Publicity Texts

—A Case Study of “The Report at 19th CPC National Congress”

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Abstract

The English translation of Chinese political publicity texts is an important way to construct and disseminate China's image, and is also one way for the international community to understand China properly. In the process of English translation, construal ways can show different linguistic features. This paper combines quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis. Through the self built small Chinese—English parallel corpus, the author analyzed the linguistic features of the report at 19th CPC National Congress and its' English version. Meanwhile, based on the theory of Langacker's construal theory, the preferred cognitive way and relationship of synchronic correspondence between Chinese and English version's linguistic features would be explored, so as to make the Chinese story more attractive and tell the Chinese story to the world in an effective way.

Keywords: C-E Parallel Corpus; Linguistic Features; Construal Theory; China's Image

1. Introduction

In recent years, the international community has paid great attention to the two sessions of China (NPC and CPPCC), especially the reports of government work and the party congress. They are not only important ways for the international community to understand China, but also opportunities to construct and disseminate China's image. In 2017, China invited foreign experts to translate the Report at 19th CPC National Congress for the first time.

At present, the translation studies of the 19th National Congress's report in China are mostly from a qualitative perspective. Zhang Linna (2018) described the Russian translation of the 19th National Congress' report on the analysis of polysemous words and the translation of proverbs and proverbs. Yang Wangping (2018) explored the starting point of Chinese understanding and the method of English translation. Few scholars used corpus to conduct research. This paper combines quantitative and qualitative analysis together and make a statistical analysis of the specific linguistic features on the basis of self-built small Chinese—English parallel corpus. At last, this

paper will make a descriptive interpretation of the differences in the linguistic features of the translation with Langacker's cognitive construal theory.

2. Construal Theory

Langacker argues that "construal" is the relationship between the speaker (or the listener) and the conceptualized and depictive scenario (Langacker 1987: 487-488). The meaning of a language is not just the content of what it triggers, but it is also important how the content is understood (Langacker 2008: 55). Langacker holds that there are four dimensions of construal, namely, specificity, perspective, prominence and focus. Specificity refers to the degree of descriptive sophistication of the same scene or event, with macroscopic and microscopic description. Saliency refers to the fact that the contents highlighted in language expressions are different. Some highlights the process while other highlights the result. Langacker (2008) discusses the prominent dimensions from two aspects: the profile and the trajector / landmark. Both the trajector and the landmark can distinguish the differences of participants' status in the highlighted relationship of profile. The focus is expressed in the language through a cognitive structure "graphics / background" or "trajector / landmark". From the four specific dimensions of construal, there are different representations in Chinese and English. Perspective is the different language expressions produced by different observation angles in the process of scene construal. In translation, the translator's understanding of the scene expressed in the original text will vary in degree, prominence and perspective in the process of construal.

3. Research Design

Data selection and collection. The Chinese materials are chosen from People's daily which was issued on October 28, 2017 and the English version was issued by the Central Committee's Compilation and Translation Bureau on November 8, 2017. In the process of translating the report at 19th CPC National Congress, foreign experts are invited to translate the documents of the Chinese Party Congress for the first time. Therefore, the corpus is small, but it is representative. The translator's individual style has little influence on the translation and can be selected as a case study.

Corpus creating and tagging. Before the creation of the corpus, the author used Tmxmall online tool and manual proofreading to clean up the Chinese and English texts of the Report at 19th CPC National Congress, which did not change the punctuation and sentence position of the original text, and deleted the footnote. Meanwhile, according to the standard made by Hu Kaibao (2011), which takes Chinese text as a reference and marks full stop, question mark, exclamation mark and dash as sentence mark, and the author aligns the Chinese and English text on Tmxmall. The author uses the Sketch Engine online corpus to build a pcorpus. Besides the commonly used analytical and statistical functions, Sketch Engine can also build parallel corpus and analogical corpus with the functions of token, annotation and segmentation.

4. Findings and Discussion

The total number of words in Chinese and English parallel corpora is 15759, and the number of tokens is 18873. The total number of English words is 24482, and the number of Chinese tokens is 27500.

4.1 Specificity

The specificity of Chinese and English will be different even if people construe the same scene. The "specificity" in the construal theory can be a precise and specific description of the same scene and also be reflected in the general description of the same scenario.

Table 1 Comparison of sentence mean length between Chinese and English Texts

	Chinese	English
Total number of words	15759	24482
Total number of sentences	677	1043
Sentence Mean Length	23.28	23.47

The results of Table 1 show that the total number of words in the English text is more than that in the Chinese text. The author holds the view that it could be explicitation in the process of translation. Ke Fei (2005) thinks that explicitation is divided into form and meaning explicitation. The former means that Chinese words often do not use conjunctions, pronouns and other links to understand the inner relationship. The logical relationship in English must be expressed in a complete meaning through conjunctions, pronouns and prepositions.

For example (1):

Chinese: 行百里者半九十。

English: *Never forget why you started, and you can accomplish your mission. (10)*
--The Report at 19th CPC National Congress

Through adding conjunctions and personal pronouns, the meaning of the translated sentence is complete and easier to understand, and also the number of words in the translated sentence is more than that in original sentence.

Meaning explicitation refers to some idioms and proverbs in Chinese which need to be interpreted in more words in English to explain their real meaning.

For example (2):

Chinese: 行百里者半九十。

English: *As the Chinese saying goes, the last leg of a journey just marks the halfway point.*
--The Report at 19th CPC National Congress

The Chinese "百里" and "九十" are big concepts. However, in the English sentence, the construal of the two concepts is a specific "leg", which narrows the view scope and makes it convenient for the readers to understand.

What's more, the change in specificity involves the cognitive expansion of the translator's attention and generalization in the process of reconstrual. Therefore, the number of English sentences is more than Chinese, which shows that the normalization of the English version are more obvious. The English version segmented and recognized the Chinese text, and made a more specific description of the same scene, which makes English readers understand easily. By counting the pairs of sentences in the translated text, it is about 15% of the English sentences appeared in one Chinese sentence.

Table 2 The type of sentence pairs in English version

English version		
Sentence pairs (Chinese to English)	Number	Percent
One to Two	111	9.71%
One to three	49	4.29%
One to Four	18	1.73%

For example (3):

Chinese: 主旋律更加响亮，正能量更加强劲，文化自信得到彰显，国家文化软实力和中华文化影响力大幅提升，全党全社会思想上的团结统一更加坚固。(1)

English: Our country's underlying values hold greater appeal than ever before, and the wave of positive energy felt throughout society is building.// We, the Chinese people, have greater confidence in our own culture. //China's cultural soft power and the international influence of Chinese culture have increased significantly. //There is greater unity in thinking both within the Party and throughout society. (4)

The original is one sentence, the English version includes four sentences. It shows that the translation makes a detailed description of the original expression. The original semantic is rich and concentrated. So the English version should increase scalar adjustments to make the semantic logical connection complete, such as the complement of corresponding main pronoun---"We, the Chinese people". The original Chinese sentence is divided into four sentences, which makes the grammar and semantics more complete. The English version is more in line with the readers' thinking habits, and is convenient for readers to understand and accept.

4.2 Perspective

The perspective is hidden in the semantic concept in many cases and is not directly reflected on the semantics of the language, but through the semantic concept of expression, which needs an overall analysis to identify. In order to conform to English readers' mode of thinking, translators

will choose the appropriate subjective or object perspective to translate Chinese into English. According to the statistics of Readability analyzer, 115 passive sentences appeared in the English version, which accounts for about 11% in the total number of English sentences.

Table 4 Passive sentence in the English version

Passive Voice	Translation text
have been+-ed	34
be+-ed	52
Modal verbs+-ed	20
to be+-ed	4
get+-ed	3
become+-ed	1
remain+-ed	1

The passive sentences in the form of be+-ed account for about 45% in the passive sentences, and followed by the form of have been+-ed (30%). From the original to the translated version, the translation of passive sentences embodies the change from the subjective perspective of participants to the objective perspective of non-participants.

For example (4):

Chinese: 综合分析国际国内形势和我国发展条件, 从二〇二〇年到本世纪中叶可以分两个阶段来安排。

English: Based on a comprehensive analysis of the international and domestic environments and the conditions for China's development, we have drawn up a two-stage development plan for the period from 2020 to the middle of this century.

The subject perspective of the first half of the original text is dealt with as the object perspective in the targeted language in the process of reconstrual. "Based on" is more able to reflect an objective social environment. The English sentence hier complements the subject "we" to form a subject perspective. Flexible translation skills make the translated sentence more kind and conformed with the mode of thinking of the English readers.

The proportion of passive sentences in the English version is not large, and the active sentences' proportion is about 89%. This way can make the translation texts friendly and attractive and the relationship between the translation texts and the readers closer, which can embody the exact meaning of the Chinese political publicity text.

4.3 Saliency and Focus

The author uses Langacker's construal theory to make analysis, and hier combines saliency with focus to analyze them together. In translation, the salient content of the original and the translation texts will change due to the different ways of thinking between different nations.

For example (5):

Chinese: 开放性经济新体制逐步健全, 对外贸易、对外投资、外汇储备稳居世界前列。

English: The new institutions of the open economy have been steadily improved. China now leads the world in trade, outbound investment, and foreign exchange reserves.

It can be seen that the salient content is changing from "逐步(gradual)" to "have been improved" and from highlighting the process in the original to the result in the targeted text. But both the original and the translation text are the subjective perspective. Their trajector remained consistent, that is "开放性经济" and "The new institutions of the open economy". Through this translation technique, the information function of the text has been realized more concretely.

Lastly, Lexical density is the proportion of lexical words to grammatical words in a corpus (Halliday 1985). From the corpus we can see the information about lexical density.

Table 3 : Lexical density

Texts	Lexical words	Grammatical words	Total number of words	Lexical density (%)
Chinese	2984	12775	15759	18.94%
English	3420	21062	24482	13.97%
Discrepancy	436	8287	8724	-4.97

The lexical density can be used to measure the amount of text information and the difficulty of reading. The greater the lexical density is, the text is more difficult to understand. On the contrary, the smaller the lexical density is, the text is easier to understand. From table 3 we can see that the lexical density (13.97%) of the English version is lower than that of the Chinese version (18.94%). So the difficulty of reading is reduced, which makes English readers understand well. In addition, there is no big difference between the sentence mean length (23.28%) of the Chinese text

and the sentence mean length (23.47%) of the English version, which can be seen that the English Version keeps high consistency with the original.

5. Conclusion

In the process of translating Chinese political publicity text into English, one reconstrual process is essential because of different thinking modes of Chinese and English readers. The translator will use various translation techniques flexibly according to the cognitive and political publicity texts translation requirements behind the language, and make the specificity change in the way of refinement or generalization. The four dimensions of construal theory are interrelated. Therefore, we will take different perspectives from the original text as needed in the translation. And the content of salience would be turned from dynamic process to the result.

It is the first time that China has invited foreign experts to intervene in the translation of the reports of the National Party Congress since the Reform and Opening up. They adopted flexible translation techniques which is more suited to the thinking ways of foreign readers. While the English version has high readability and acceptability, it is also consistent with the meaning of the original. Consequently, the translation of the report at 19th CPC National Congress can disseminate China's image exactly and positively when it spreads information.

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