A Study on the English Translation of Chinese News Headlines Under the Guidance of Communicative Translation

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Abstract

News headlines are the "eyes" of the news. Good news headlines play an important role in attracting readers and condensing news content. In the process of translating news, the translators need to pay more attention to translating the headlines. Under the guidance of communicative translation strategy, combining specific translation examples of news headlines, this article explores the English translation skills of Chinese news headlines. The researcher finally finds out that translators should make use of translation skills like word-to-word translation, amplification and adaptation flexibly, in order to make the translated versions of news headlines in line with the expressing habit of English.

Keywords: news headlines, communicative translation, translation examples, translation skills

1. Introduction

With the further development of economic globalization, the international communication is becoming more and more frequent. As a platform for information transmission between nations, news is of great importance and has become the main stage where information exchange in international economy, science and technology, military, culture and other fields happens. The accuracy of news translation is tightly related to the accuracy and efficiency of the international information exchange.

News headlines, the "eye" of the news, are more special than the news texts. On the one hand, they play an important role in attracting readers' reading interest. On the other hand, they are written to condense the main content of the news with concise languages so that the readers can get the accurate information of the news in a short time. Zhen Dong holds the view that news headlines are just like the "windows" of the news through which people can get information of the news quickly and easily. Good headlines are usually more valuable even than the news (Dong, 2017). So it requires that translators need to put more effort in translating the headlines than in translating the news themselves. Therefore, when translating news headlines, the translators need to be more cautious to realize their function. They should flexibly select translation skills to deal with different kinds of headlines accordingly so as to make the translation of news headlines more accurate and make the information exchange between nations more efficient.

2. Theoretical Basis and the Guiding Significance

2.1 Communicative Translation Strategy

In the book *Approaches to Translation*, Peter Newmark mentions two major translation strategies, namely, communicative translation and semantic translation (Newmark, 2001). Communicative translation emphasizes that the target readers are the center of the whole translation process. The communication effects of translated texts should be the same as that of the original texts. In other words, communicative translation strategy pays

more attention to the function of translated texts, so that the target readers can have the same feeling and reading experience as the original language readers. While semantic translation strategy pays more attention to retaining the characteristics of the original texts. It tries to retain the form of the original language, which requires that the translated texts should be more faithful to the original texts. Newmark believes that all texts have semantic and communicative functions, but when translating them, if the two cannot be realized at the same time, the translators should pay more attention to communicative functions (Meng, 2020).

2.2 The Guiding Significance of Communicative Translation Strategy

When translating the news headlines, the translators need to make it clear that the fundamental purpose of the translation is to make sure that the information transferred by the news headlines can be accurately understood by the target readers. And the translated texts are going to provide the readers with the same reading feelings as the original readers, which means that target readers can understand the original meaning of the texts and get the same information as the readers of the original texts. This purpose is consistent with what communicative translation emphasizes. To achieve this goal, translators can use communicative translation strategy as a guidance to find better translation skills.

What's more, news headlines can be categorized into informative texts, so when translating them, translators should pay more attention to the effects of information transmission, which proves that communicative translation can guide the news headlines translation well again.

Thus, both the translation purpose and the text type of news headlines match well with what communicative translation strategy talks about. So translators can use it as a guidance to make the translated news headlines more accurate, fluent and readable.

3. Translation Skills of Chinese News Headlines

Yali Niu holds the view that there are indeed some differences between English and Chinese news headlines in terms of tense, vocabulary and rhetoric (Niu, 2013). So the differences exist in several language levels. It's obvious that the root cause of the differences between English and Chinese news headlines lies in the differences between English and Chinese, as well as the differences between English and Chinese news language expressing habits. Therefore, when translating them, the translator needs to take these differences into consideration. But only knowing the differences are not enough, the translators should also bear in mind that the news headlines have their own characteristics which should not be dismissed in the translating process. Yan Li believes that when translating news headlines, translators should correctly understand the headlines in advance. They need to take good care of the characteristics of them, understand the beauty of the headlines, and enhance the readability of the headlines. Only in this way can the translated news headlines play a vital role in information transmission effectively (Li, 2022). Under the guidance of communicative translation, the translators should take the target language reader as the center. Their reading experience are the key points in translating the headlines. Translators should fully understand the headlines before translating and flexibly select the translation skills in order to allow the translated news headlines to transmit information accurately and efficiently. Meanwhile, the essential characteristics of the news headlines should be maintained when translating.

3.1 Word-to-Word Translation

Most news headlines are concise. In order to maximize this characteristic, translators sometimes need to consider the use of word-to-word translation skill, especially when the original Chinese news headlines are concise. Under this circumstance, the Chinese headlines can be directly translated into the English version word to word. Word-to-word translation skill is simple and efficient, and it can achieve the purpose of communicative translation.

For example, when translating the news headline "富士康为谁造车?", it's more appropriate for the translator to make use of word-to-word translation skill. It can be translated as "Who does Foxconn make cars for?" The headline is a question in Chinese, which contains only a few words. The author of the original text wants to make use of the question to attract the reading interest of the readers and to urge them to read the rest page of the news. Therefore, when translating it into English, the translator should retain the sentence form of question. Communicative translation emphasizes that target readers should have the same reading feelings as readers of the original texts. The translator chooses to retain the sentence structure here in order to help to keep the characteristic of the Chinese text. English readers will have interest to continue reading when they see the question as well. And the English sentence is also not very long. The word-to-word translation of the headline here has no bad effect to the accuracy of information transmission, and English readers will understand the information sent by the translated headline comprehensively just like the Chinese readers.

Here is another example. When translating the headline "微博放不下电商", the translator also uses word-to-word translation skill and translate it into "Weibo can't let go of e-commerce." Communicative translation emphasizes the reading feelings of the target readers, and tries to offer them the same reading

experience as the original language readers. It can be noted that personification skill is used in this headline. The word "放不下" is a verb for people in Chinese, but Weibo is a social platform. Although personification skill is seldom used in writing English news headlines, the translator still retains it here in order to make the target readers have the same experience as the original readers and keep the interest of original sentence. So the English readers can experience the pleasure of reading this headline here. Zhijian Liang and Tinglan Wu said, translators need to make the expression of translated texts more vivid, elegant and interesting (Liang & Wu, 2022). So, that translators use word-to-word translating skill does not simply mean that the translated texts and the original texts are basically the same. It's just that the translator is trying to maintain the original characteristic of the Chinese headlines.

3.2 Amplification

From the perspective of communicative translation, in order to balance the differences between English and Chinese and provide the English readers with the same experience as Chinese readers, translators sometimes need to make use of amplification, especially when the expression in Chinese is more obscure than that in English. In Chinese, people will sometimes hide some information, intending to arouse readers' interest. Such expression is too difficult for the English readers to understand. And this kind of expression is usually based on Chinese thinking, making the English readers confused. Therefore, when dealing with Chinese news headlines with this kind of characteristic, the translators should choose the skill of amplification to translate, adding the hidden information back to the sentence, so as to avoid the misunderstanding of the English readers.

For example, when translating the news headline "中关村这十年", the translator needs to know that if it is translated word to word, the translated text will be "ZOL's ten years". But this version only shows the surface meaning of the original text, without taking into account the content behind it. The whole news actually describes the changes in ZOL in the past decade and the achievements made there. "Changes and achievements" should be made up in the English version, otherwise English readers cannot figure out what the sentence "ZOL's ten years" is trying to say. Chinese readers may easily understand that the subtext here is "changes and development", but English readers may not have the same experience. It should be translated as "The development of ZOL in the past decade ". The expression like this is more comprehensive then, and it is more in line with the English expressing habit.

Here is another example, the headline "开放的平台 共赢的舞台" can be translated into "An open platform and a win-win stage, the 5th China International Import Expo was officially held in Shanghai". It's quite obvious that the translator adds a long sentence after the original sentence. Because if the headline is translated directly into "An open platform and a win-win stage", the whole meaning of the news will be missed by the target readers. Because the news is talking about the beginning of the International Import Expo. If the translator does not list the further information after, it will be hard for the reader to figure out what the platform and the stage mean, and their reading experience will be quite bad. In Chinese, the Import Expo is compared to platform and stage, which may be too abstract for the English readers to understand. English news expressions are usually more direct, so the translator adds those information after the main sentence in order to make the translated version more close to English readers.

Amplification is an effective translation skill for translating news headlines. Due to the difference in length and expressing habits between Chinese and English, it is necessary for the readers to add the hidden information to some Chinese headlines in order to make the English versions more complete.

3.3 Adaptation

In Chinese news headlines, there are some expressions like "小田变大田 农户笑开颜", which looks like ancient Chinese poems. Translators need to pay attention to this kind of headlines because they are more complicated than usual ones. In order to achieve great communicative effect, translators should not stick to the original form of it because if the sentences like that are translated word to word, the readers may get confused, and the sentence may be too long. If the headline here is translated directly into "Small lands become big lands, and farmers are happy", it can be seen that the translation here is relatively lengthy on the one hand, and on the other hand, it only conveys the superficial meaning of the headline and even gives the wrong information. From the perspective of communicative translation, this version does not consider the target readers' feelings at all. Readers cannot understand the exact meaning that the news wants to express. So the translator restructures the sentence according to the content of the news. What the news is trying to state here is the land consolidation policy, which improves the efficiency of production and planting and the life of farmers. So the translator should adapt the news headline into "Land consolidation policy made great achievements". The translator tries to summarize the news content and use it as news headlines, so that English readers can know that the news is mainly about the great achievements made by land consolidation. This translated version is consistent with the reader-centered concept advocated by communicative translation strategy. It's necessary to adapt headlines like this to make it easier to understand for the target readers.

Here is another example of using adaptation skill in translating news headlines. The translator translates the headline "白酒为什么不香了？单月市值狂泄上万亿" into "The market value of liquor enterprises declined by more than one trillion in a month." When analyzing the Chinese news headline here, it's easy to find that the writer tries to use a question to arouse the interest of the readers. But the question here with strong Chinese characteristic does not need to be translated in English. Because the word "不香了" is a pun, which indicates both the flavor of liquor and the condition that liquor enterprises are facing. It's too complex to find an appropriate expression in English to express it. So the translator can just adapt this news headline by telling the readers the main information of this news. In this way, the reader will understand the news better as well. It's quite efficient. So when the information given by the Chinese news headlines are too complicated and already has a bad influence on the readers' reading experience. The translator can just make use of the skill of adaptation. Sometimes it's more efficient to adapt the headlines than translating them stiffly, and in this way, the meaning of the original texts can be expressed more accurately.

4. Conclusion

News headlines are the "eyes and windows" of news. They play a vital role in attracting readers' reading interests and condensing the main content of the news. So translating news headlines accurately is quite significant to the international news exchange. Due to the differences between English and Chinese, there are often many difficulties in translating Chinese news headlines into English. Under the guidance of communicative translation strategy, translators can make appropriate adjustments when translating the headlines to make the translated texts more consistent with target readers' reading habits and realize accurate information transmission between nations. In the process of translating Chinese news headlines, translators can take effective means such as word-to-word translation, amplification, adaptation and so on to deal with different news headlines, so as to make the translated news headlines more authentic, more accurate and more readable for the target readers.

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