

Translation of China and the World Trade Organization from the Perspective of Adaptation Theory

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Abstract: Adaptation theory provides a coherent framework for pragmatic and translation studies. It not only has strong explanatory power for translation, but also has guiding significance for translation practice. In this paper, The English translation of the White Paper on China and the World Trade Organisation is analyzed from the perspective of adjustment theory, including contextual adjustment, structural adjustment, dynamic adjustment and the place value of adjustment. The result shows that the adaptation theory plays a guiding role in the translation of the White Paper, and the translator should make dynamic adaptation in both linguistic and non-linguistic dimensions. It hopes that readers will have a more comprehensive understanding of China's economic policy of opening up to the outside world, and international exchanges and the construction of China's image will be promoted.

1. Introduction

White Paper in a broad sense refers to the government, parliament and other public documents on major political, economic, diplomatic and other issues. China's State Council Information Office published a white paper titled "China and the World Trade Organization" on June 28, 2018. Its Chinese and English versions are obtained from the official website of xinhuanet.

Adaptation theory was proposed by the famous Belgian linguist Jef Verschueren, which is applied in translation studies. In this paper, the translation of "China and the World Trade Organization" will be discussed from four perspectives of adaptation theory.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Previous studies on adaptation theory

This study combines adaptation theories from different perspectives. Leo Hickey (2001) mentions that translation is to achieve linguistic equivalence between the translated text and the original text, so that the readers of the translated text can obtain the same understanding and feelings as the readers of the original text. Understanding and interpreting pragmatics from a new perspective, the study explores the constraints and influences of pragmatic factors on the practical

operation of translators and translators from multiple perspectives[3]. He present study combs through the research vein of the adaptation theory, summarizes scholars' main research achievements, analyzes the research characteristics and deficiencies in this field, and proposes issues to be further explored. It also analyzes the characteristics and shortcomings of the research in this field, and puts forward the issues to be further explored. See Table 1 for details.

Table 1: Previous research on adaptation theory

| Author | Title and date of document | viewpoints |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Jef Verschueren | Review of new works by Verschueren (1999) | Language use is a continuous process of language choice, whether conscious or unconscious, for internal or external reasons. Language choice and language adaptation are dialectically linked. |
| Leo Hickey | The Pragmatics of Translation (2001) | Translation consists of achieving linguistic equivalence between the translated text and the original text so that the reader of the translated text has the same understanding and the same feelings as the reader of the original text. |
| Jef Verschueren & Jan-Ola Ostman | Cognition and Pragmatics (Handbook of Pragmatics Highlights) (2009) | The adaptive theory of pragmatics cannot be fully formulated without reference to the human mind as an adaptive medium |
| Ma Hui | Implications of Linguistic Conformity Theory for Translation (2006) | Translation is constantly evolving due to the constraints of different environments and is always in a process of dynamic change and negotiation |
| Ma xia | Interpreting: Selection, Negotiation and Conformity - Conformist Contextual Relations in Interpreting (2006) | Interpretation is a complex communicative act in a specific context, and the process of expressing the source language in the target language is a dynamic process that changes from start to finish |
| Huang yan | An Adaptationist Perspective on Linguistic Translation (2007) | Linguistic translation cannot be separated from the translator's mental awareness |

2.2. Previous studies on the translation of the whitepaper

There are few studies on translation of the White Paper. Research perspectives include translation criticism, Corpus, western rhetoric, Skopos theory, text type, relevance theory, presupposition and adaptation theory. See Table 2 for details

Table 2: Previous studies on the translation of the whitepaper

| Research Perspectives | author | Title and date of document | viewpoints |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|---|---|
| presupposition | Luan ying | Interpretation and Translation of Semantic Presuppositions (2012) | Semantic presuppositions rely heavily on single-sentence |
| Skopos theory | Niu Xiaolong | A Study of Chinese-English Translation of Chinese Government White Papers from the Perspective of Purpose Theory (2012) | Scopos Theory is Guiding and Applicable to the English Translation of Chinese Government White Papers |
| Adaptation Theory | Long Jiangyan | China's peaceful development (2013) | Translation is actually a dynamic process of language selection |
| Translation criticism | Zeng Lisha | Commentary on the English translation of China's National Defence 2002 (White Paper) (2005) | The theoretical value of translation criticism is proportional to the "measure" of the morphological characteristics of the typical informational nature of the argument to be made |
| Corpus | Yu hong | Examination of the trend of "corpus-based simplification of translation of official government documents" (2016). | Macro-corpus statistics do not fully support the simplification hypothesis, and traces of simplified processing can be found in the atypical collocations of the function word IN |
| Western Rhetoric | Han Ximiao | Telling China's Story (2017) | The English translation takes full account of the dialectic between fact and eloquence, the core position of the audience and the shift in linguistic style of expression |
| Text Type | Yang Wenqiang | A study of Chinese-English translation of governmental white papers from the perspective of textual typology (2018) | The Indispensable Value of Text Types in Chinese-English Translation of Government White Papers |
| Relevance Theory | Zheng Zheng and Liu Xun | A study of the English translation of military discourse from the perspective of relevance theory (2013). | Translation of external communication materials has a significant impact. |

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Variability, negotiability and adaptability of language

Verschueren (2000) put forward the pragmatic perspective in his book *Understanding Pragmatics*, which develops his previous theory of adaptation to understand and interpret Pragmatics in a new perspective[2]. According to the "pragmatic perspective" and the "adaptation theory", Victorinox(2010) holds that language has the characteristics of variability, negotiability and adaptability, which can describe and explain the process of language use from four aspects: the adaptation of context, the adaptation of language structure, the dynamic adaptation and salience of adaptation. Verschueren regards the use of language as "making linguistic choices, whether consciously or unconsciously, for internal or external reasons, at every level of language" [4]. According to Verschueren's theory, language selection consists of three important components: variability, negotiation and adaptability. Variability means that language has a range of alternative possibilities, and the range of alternatives is not fixed and permanent. Instead, the range of options varies. Negotiation means that language choice is not made mechanically or strictly according to the form-function relationship, but under highly flexible principles and strategies. Adaptability refers to the ability of language users to make flexible choices from alternative items, to make strategic choices, and to adapt to the communicative purposes of both sides[5].

3.2. Four study angles of adaptation theory

Based on adaptation, linguistic adaptation theory describes and explains language use from the following four aspects: contextual adaptation, structural adaptation, dynamic adaptation and salience of adaptation.

Contextual adaptation includes all the elements (physical, social and mental dimension) that must be adapted to linguistic choice in communicative context. Structural adaptation includes the language structure at any level of an organization and the principles followed in the structural organization process. Dynamic adaptation reflects the operation of communication principles and strategies in the negotiation process, and reflects the actual operation of the selection process. Salience of adaptation is essentially the self-returning consciousness in language use, which is also called metapragmatic awareness on the pragmatic level.

4. A Case Study of Translation of China and the World Trade Organization from the Perspective of Adaptation Theory

In this part, the translation of the White Paper "China and the World Trade Organization" will be analyzed from contextual adaptation, structural adaptation, dynamic adaptation and salience of adaptation. The Chinese and English versions are obtained from the official website of Xinhuanet.

4.1. Contextual adaptation

Contextual adaptation refers to the adaptation of language choices to linguistic and communicative contexts in the process of language use. Linguistic context consists of three aspects: textual cohesion, inter-textual constraints and linear sequence. Communicative context includes language user, psychological world, social world, physical world and so on.

4.1.1 Adaption to readers' mental world

The mental world in the process of communication includes cognitive and affective factors such

as personality, emotion, desire and intention. In the process of communication, the speaker's choice of language is a dynamic process which adapts to the psychological world of both sides.

Example 1:

TT: Education campaigns on WTO rules have been extensively rolled out, raising public awareness of the market, competition, rules and the concept of rule of law.

In the source sentence, “awareness” is repeated for three times. Only one is used in the translation, which avoids repetition and meets the readers' aesthetic expectations.

4.1.2 Adaption to readers' mental world

The social world refers to the principles and norms laid down by the social occasions, social environment and cultural atmosphere for the speech acts of the communicators. That is to say, the communicator's language choice must conform to the social occasion, social environment and the communication terms of the language community [6].

Example 1:

“Everything that is not forbidden is allowed” is a legal proverb. As a citizen, he can use his rights boldly. For the government, every citizen's right must be respected. And Omits the translation of the law in the translation. So, the translation reflects the adaptation to cultural context.

4.2. Structural adaptation

Structural adaptation is analyzed at the lexical and syntactic level.

4.2.1 Adaption to readers' mental world

“As Chinese is dynamic and English is stative, verbs are frequently used in Chinese while nouns, adjectives, prepositions and adverbs are frequently used in English” [1].

“Development with its door wide open” is composed of “verb + noun + verb + noun” and is converted into “noun + prepositional phrase” in translation. “Win-win results” are semantically repetitive. Omission is applied in translation. Raise public awareness of ...” consists of a noun, a verb and the object, which is converted into “verb + object” in translation. “Important”, an adjective, is used as the attribute which means important. These translations embody structural adaptation and conform to English expressions.

4.2.2 Adaption at the syntactic level

(1) active sentence

Example 1:

TT: The State Intellectual Property Office has been restructured to strengthen law enforcement.

Most of the passive meanings in Chinese can be expressed in the form of active and passive sentences. Active voice is used in the source sentence. Passive voice is adopted and the repetitive part is omitted in translation.

(2) zero-subject sentence

Example 2:

TT: China has accelerated efforts to improve the socialist market economy system and strengthen the market system. This has involved reorganizing..., letting....

There is no subject and connective in the source sentence, which embodies that Chinese is flexible and paratactic. In contrast, English is rigid and hypotactic. Therefore, the translator adds the subject “China” and conjunctions.

4.3. Dynamic adaptation

Dynamic adaptation refers to the "dynamic generation of meaning in language use", which is embodied in time and social relation.

4.3.1 Dynamic adaptation to time

Language develops and changes with the Times, and the use and choice of language bear the imprint of the Times. When the source language is transferred into the target language, the translator needs to consider the characteristics of the Times that affect the reader's aesthetic perception and reception.

For example, in this white paper, there are three interpretations of "moderate prosperity" in ancient times. One meaning is relatively stable life. One meaning is a society inferior to the thought of "Great Harmony". One meaning is that the family is well-off. With the development of China, its translation embodies dynamic adaptation to time. "Belt and Road" stands for the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road", which aims to actively develop economic partnerships with the countries along the Belt and Road and jointly build a community of shared destiny, characterised by mutual political trust, economic integration and cultural inclusion, with common interests, a bright future and shared responsibilities. Its translation is "the Belt and Road" that has the significance of the New Era. In a word, there is no perfect translation which is not influenced by time, and translation activities should adapt to the development of the Times.

4.3.2 Dynamic adaptation to social relation

Different contexts restrict the choice of language. As the context is dynamic, the language is chosen according to the context. For example, in the original text, "autonomous regions" is equivalent to an administrative unit at the provincial level in China. Compared with ordinary provinces, its local governments have more autonomous space in internal affairs than other administrative regions at the same level. "Municipality", compromised as "noun + prepositional phrase". The translator dynamically adapts it to the social context.

4.4 Salience of adaptation

Verschueren (2000) claims that what is studied in the salience of the adaptation process is the characteristics and mechanism of the adaptation process, not the actual content of certain mental states. Salience is basically a function of the operation of the reflexive awareness involved in language use [3]. It addresses the issue of the mental work that approaches the process of meaning generation in language use. As far as translation is concerned, if a translator intends to convey special or implicit meaning in an excerpt in the target text, the rendition of the excerpt usually displays a high degree of salience. The degree of the translators' salience is influenced by the following two factors: salience concerning the translation purpose and salience concerning readers' response.

4.4.1 Salience concerning translation purpose

The translation purpose of the white paper entitled "China and the World Trade Organization" is to help readers better understand China's economic policy of opening up to the outside world. Therefore, translators are bound to make different language choices in the process of translation [2].

Example 1:

The source sentence introduces strengthening IPR protection on China's own initiative. Due to

the lack of social background, foreign readers can not understand , but in the translation the translator uses direct translation and Italian translation to let foreign readers understand China's initiatives in intellectual property protection. "Network Sword Campaign", "Sword-net Campaign", "Sweeping Campaign", "Network Sword Campaign"

4.4.2 Salience concerning reader's response

Besides, the translator should be aware of the reader's response in the process of translation. Reader's response plays an important role in the communication of the target text. Precisely speaking, if the reader cannot accept and understand the translation, the translation process will be lost. Due to the differences between Chinese and English, the translator must make appropriate linguistic choices in the process of translation so as to ensure that the target text can be understood by the target readers.

5. Conclusion

This paper has analyzed the translation of the White Paper "China and the World Trade Organization" from the perspective of adaptation theory, including contextual adaptation, structural adaptation, dynamic adaptation and salience of adaptation. It can be concluded that adaptation theory plays a guiding role in the translation of the White Paper, and the translator should make dynamic adaptation in both linguistic and non-linguistic dimensions. However, due to the limited understanding of adaptation theory and examples, there are limitations in this paper. In the future, the translation of the white paper deserves more deep researches.

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