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**ON C-E TRANSLATION STRATEGIES OF POLITICAL TEXTS FROM  
THE PERSPECTIVE OF SKOPOS THEORY : A CASE STUDY OF CHINA  
AND THE WORLD IN THE NEW ERA**

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**ABSTRACT**

Since the arrival of the 21st century, the relationship between China and the world has become closer and closer. The publication of the white paper *China and the World in the New Era* introduces China to the world from the comprehensive perspective as it seeks to make the world better understands China's development. Based on Skopos theory, this paper, selecting the English version *China and the World in the New Era* as the research corpus, studies textual characteristics of the white paper and translation strategies that have been employed. It is hoped to provide reference for future translation practice of political texts.

**Key words:** Skopos theory, Textual characteristics, Translation strategies.

**1. Introduction**

As an important practical style, the political text is highly political, authoritative and concise with clear views, which mainly includes the speeches of the Communist Party of China and state leaders, the white papers and work reports of the Party and government, etc. In addition to conveying the general policies of China, it also reflects the will of the Party and the state and represents the fundamental interests of Chinese people (Wang Xiaoping, 2006).

China has entered a new era of development. China now has an impact on the world that is ever more comprehensive, profound and long-lasting, and the world is paying ever greater attention to China. What path has China taken? Where is China going? How will the developing China interact with the rest of the world? The publication of the white paper *China and the World in the New Era* can respond to the world's questions about China, and display China's national image,

promote international trust, strengthen international cooperation, as well as help the international community better understand China's development. Therefore, the translation of the white paper is crucially important. If one can not translate the white paper properly, misunderstanding will be created, thus affecting the relationship between China and the rest of the world. Compared with ordinary text translation, the white paper translation is more professional and purposeful, so conveying the original and exact information as faithfully as possible is extremely important to the text translation. However, many differences between Chinese and English have brought some difficulties to C-E translation. Skopos theory originated in the late 1970s provides a new perspective for the translation for practical texts (He Qingji, 2007). Skopos theory boldly gets rid of the shackles of Equivalence Theory, taking Skopos as the general rule. It provides a new space for the world translation research.

At present, there is no relevant research on the translation of *China and the World in the New Era* from the perspective of Skopos theory, but from other perspectives. Chen Meisong & Wang Hui (2020) delved into the construction of an appropriate national image in the white paper *China and the World in the New Era* from the perspective of Pragmatic Identity and found out how the relationship between China and the whole world is regulated. Xu Zhonghua & Yang Yuji (2021) studied the English translation of *China and the World in the New Era* based on the translation variation theory. They believed that the translation variation theory provided a new perspective for the translation of government documents, and proposed that strategies such as addition, subtraction, editing and narration could be used to translate the government work report.

Therefore, this paper selects the English translation of *China and the World in the New Era* as an example and analyzes the translation of the white paper and researches into what kind of translation strategies will be used to translate the text from the perspective of Skopos theory. The author hopes to inspire more readers and provide reference for future translation practice of political texts from the view point of the Skopos theory.

## **2. An Overview to Skopos Theory**

The concept of Skopos theory was put forward by Hans J. Vermeer in 1978. It was the time when Equivalence Theory and Linguistic Schools prevailed. Skopos theory boldly gets rid of the shackles of Equivalence Theory, takes Skopos as the general rule, and studies translation in the framework of Behavior Theory and cross-cultural communication. Hans J. Vermeer (1989: 20) put forward the Skopos theory, which freed translation studies from the shackles of Source-centric Theory. Translation must follow some rules. Especially, the Skopos rule should be put on

the first place. At the same time, translation must follow the rules of intratextual coherence and intertextual coherence. The former means that the translation must be internally coherent and understandable to the readers, and the latter means there should be also coherent between the translation and the original text. After the introduction of these three principles, the criterion for judging translation is no longer “equivalence”, but the adequacy of the translation to achieve the intended goal. Vermeer also proposed that according to different translation purposes, translators should adopt corresponding translation strategies and they can decide which content of the original text can be retained and which needs to be adjusted or modified according to the translation purpose. It holds that the Skopos of a specific translation task determines whether a text needs to be translated literally or freely, or even both. This has settled the debate over whether translators should translate literally or freely for thousands of years. It considers translation as a cross-cultural communicative act. Every act has its own purpose, and what kind of translation strategies should be used are determined by the purpose created by the translation behavior. This is the first rule of Skopos theory. The second and third rule are Coherence rule and Fidelity rule. Besides, the coherence rule of Skopos theory thinks that “the translator should take into account the social and cultural background of the recipient of the target language and translate the text that is meaningful and acceptable to the reader. And the fidelity rule of Skopos theory means that the the translation text and the original must maintain a certain relationship. The translation is faithful to the original text, and the translation and the original texts must be kept intertextually consistent. The coherence rule and fidelity rule are subordinate to the Skopos rule.

Katherina Reiss (1989) firstly developed a translation criticism model based on the relationship between the source and target functions, thus creating a prototype of functionalist theoretical thinking. Reiss believes that ideal translation should be a comprehensive communicative translation. According to the different communicative functions of texts, Reiss divides them into three types: informative, expressive and operational. So this reflects that different types of texts should adopt different translation strategies. The white paper belongs to informative text, which not only contains the basic principles and policies of our country, but also the understanding and cognition of the politics, economy, society, diplomacy or other aspects. Its main purpose is to convey China’s policies and opinions to the outside world. Therefore, when we are engaged in the translation of white papers, we should ensure that the target readers understand the policy of the original text in the context of the target language, ensure the accurate transmission of the political meaning of the original text, and help foreign readers better understand China.

Christine Nord (2001) pointed out that to analyze the target reader is very important to

translation. Because the historical and cultural background, living habits and reading habits of foreigners are different from ours, translators must take target reader into consideration, fully consider their expectations, and adopt appropriate translation strategies so as to achieve the purpose of publicity and communication.

### **3. Translation Strategies of *China and the World in the New Era* Based on Skopos Theory**

Skopos theory pays attention to the analysis of the text, and mastering the characteristics of the text will help the translator make a good judgment on the choice of translation strategies. Based on Skopos theory, this part, taking *China and the World in the New Era* as an example, discusses the characteristics of the text as well as the translation strategies it has adopted under the guidance of three rule of Skopos theory.

#### **3.1 Translation strategies under the guidance of Skopos rule**

The rule of Skopos is the core of the three rules of Skopos theory. That means, translation strategies are determined by the purpose of target text. The white paper *China and the World in the New Era* schedules to voice the Chinese government's policies to the outside world. Words or phrases in the white paper are carefully chosen so that the text meaning is transmitted accurately. We find that the white paper often uses repetitive words, and phrases unique in Chinese to voice China's attitudes. In order to achieve the information communication function, based on Skopos rule, the emphasis should be place on showing original meaning of these words.

##### **3.1.1 Omission**

One of the marked differences between English and Chinese is the disparity in wording. *China and the World in the New Era* is a kind of official document serving for a certain political purpose. The use of repetitive words can show the resolution of the Chinese government or highlight the theme meaning. In this connection, omission are used to deal with the translation of repetitive words because the transmission of information meaning is more important than the retention of form. The examples are as follows:

Example (1)

ST: 中俄紧紧站在一起，世界就多一分和平、多一分安全、多一分稳定。

TT: A close partnership between China and Russia contributes to world peace, security and stability.

Analysis: In this example, “多一分” appeared three times, which indicates that the good relationship between China and Russia is extremely important, achieving the purpose of strengthening the tone of expression. But if the translator do the translation of “多一分” three times, the whole sentence will be redundant, violating the rule of coherence. Here, the translator adopts omission to recombines sentences according to grammatical rules, making the sentence structure more compact.

Example (2)

ST: 中国永不称霸、永不扩张、永不谋求势力范围。

TT: China will never pursue hegemony or expansion, nor will it seek to create spheres of influence

Analysis: This example shows that repetitive words “永不” are used to emphasize that China will never invade other countries and to indicate that China is determined to meet its rightful security needs as well as contribute to the growth of the world’s peaceful forces. However, instead of using “never” for three times, the translator used “never...nor...” to avoid excessive repetition of translation.

### **3.1.2 Free translation**

Phrases unique in Chinese refer to things or phenomena with Chinese characteristics that can be used to represent certain historical or social background, including the politics, economy, culture and many other aspects. They appeared in the specific cultural background of the Chinese nation and reflected the attitude and thinking patterns of the entire nation at that time. Most of these words are frequently appeared in the white paper, because they are synchronized with the times, reflecting the development of China in recent years. In translating phrases unique in Chinese, considering the lack of Chinese cultural background of foreign readers, translators should adopt free translation to make them understand the meaning and realize the communicative function and expected purpose of the translation text.

Example (3)

ST: 大国对小国要平等相待，不搞唯我独尊、强买强卖的霸道。

TT: Big countries should treat small ones as equals rather than acting as hegemons imposing their will on others.

Analysis: In this example, “唯我独尊” is closely related to Buddhist. Its original meaning is used to refer to that Sakyamuni is the greatest and the noblest person. However, now it means that the person who is extremely conceited. The free translation strategy “acting as hegemony” could get rid of the shackle of form, but express the deep meaning of it, thus achieving the communicative function.

Example (4)

ST: 中华民族历来有立己达人、兼济天下的情怀。

TT: The Chinese have always believed that “You yourself desire rank and standing; then help others to get rank and standing”. We care for the people of the world and strive for the greater good while pursuing our own development.

Analysis: This phrase “立己达人、兼济天下” is quoted from *The Analects of Confucius*, an ancient Chinese classic. The deep meaning refers to that China devotes herself to promote the common development of all countries, instead of making herself stand out. China is willing to help others. If this sentence is not translated freely, understanding the text information is not easy for English readers because of difference in their expression habits. Hence, to follow the Skopos rule, the free translation strategy must be used to make the target readers clear about the meaning.

### **3.2 Translation strategies under the guidance of coherence rule**

The coherence rule is that the target text must be coherent in order to make the intended readers to understand it, given their assumed background knowledge and situational circumstances (Schäffner, 1998). That is to say, the translator must pay more attention to the differences in language and culture between English and Chinese so that the target text will be accepted by recipients. There are two typical sentence patterns in *China and the World in the New Era*, including non-subject sentence and long sentence. With the guidance of coherence rule, translation strategies such as addition of subject, addition of logical connective are used.

#### **3.2.1 Addition of subject**

The white paper often uses “non-subject sentences”, because the text contains many sentences that indicate the policies and opinions of the Chinese government. “Non-subject sentence” refers to a single sentence that only connects verb and object, usually expressing a command pattern, and the subjects are usually “Chinese government”. Therefore, in order to avoid lengthy

sentences and make the original text concise and clear, “non-subject sentence” is widely used in the white paper. When we translate this kind of “non-subject sentence”, we often employ addition of subject to conform to the English expression habits.

Example (5)

ST: 在企业征信、信用评级、银行卡清算和非银行支付等行业给予外资国民待遇。

TT: We will give national treatment to foreign investors in industries such as business credit reporting, credit rating, bank card clearing, and non-bank payments.

Analysis: As far as Chinese readers are concerned, getting the meaning is not difficult, because they subconsciously know that the subject of the sentence is China. On the one hand, the translator uses “we” to show that the Chinese government is close to people; on the other hand, adding the subject can achieve the purpose of coherence of sentence, making it acceptable.

### 3.2.2 Addition of logical connectives

There are many long sentences in the white paper, because the white paper is highly political, rigorous and formal in terms of language and has a wide variety of information. The logical relation in Chinese can be inferred from its meaning, while the logic in English is embodied by its form, through connectives. Therefore, adding logical connectives should be employed to manifest implicit information concealed in the source text.

Example (6)

ST:

2008年，全球遭遇严重金融危机，世界经济受到重创，中国采取一系列有效措施成功应对危机，经济迅速回升向好，并持续保持中高速增长，成为世界经济增长的主要稳定器和动力源。

TT: In 2008, the world suffered a serious financial crisis and the world economy was hit hard. Through a series of effective measures to deal with the crisis, China’s economy recovered rapidly and continued to maintain a medium- and high-speed growth. As a result, China became the main stabilizing force and power source of the world economy.

Analysis: Obviously, in translation text, there are three sentences while one sentence is included in Chinese text. Besides, English is characterized by hypotaxis, and its constituents are linked with conjunctions while Chinese tends to be paratactic, and its constituents are connected by

logical meaning(Lian Shuneng, 1993). So here “as a result” is used to manifest implicit logical relation in the source text.

### **3.3 Translation strategies under the guidance of fidelity rule**

The fidelity means that the target text must be faithful to the original text for the intertextual coherence between two languages. *China and the World in the New Era* covers a wide range of contents. When conveying information, various rhetorical devices such as metaphor and parallelism will be used to enhance persuasion of the white paper. When translating, the translator should take into account the rhetorical tradition of the target language and achieve the equivalence between the original text and the target language. Therefore, the translator should be as faithful as possible to the original text so that the translation can be understood and accepted by the target readers.

#### **3.3.1 Literal translation**

A characteristic of the white paper is the use of metaphor. Metaphor is the rhetorical device to compare one thing to another thing for the purpose of showing Chinese government’s opinions. Another characteristics of the white paper is the use of four-character phrases to form a kind of parallelism. As a coherent and important part of Chinese, the four-character phrases have been an important representative structure since ancient times, which embody the simplicity of Chinese and make people sound eloquent. Based on fidelity rule, literal translation strategy is employed to maintain both the original image and meaning.

Example (7)

ST:

中国的发展，靠的是“8亿件衬衫换一架波音”的实干精神，几代人驰而不息、接续奋斗，付出别人难以想象的辛劳和汗水；

TT: China relied on the solid and unremitting efforts of generations of Chinese people, which is represented in the typical case of “800 million shirts in exchange for a Boeing airplane”.

Analysis: The translator compares people’s efforts to development with “800 million shirts in exchange for a Bobeing”, indicating that Chinese people has made enormous efforts for a better development. The translator adopts literal translation for purpose of maintaining the flavor of original, which make it easier for target readers to understand. It conforms to fidelity rule.

Example (8)



ST:

中国欢迎其他国家搭乘中国发展的“快车”“便车”，帮助更多新兴市场国家和发展中国家更好融入全球产业链、供应链、价值链，共享经济全球化红利。

TT: We welcome the people of other countries aboard the express train of China's development, and endeavor to help more emerging markets and developing economies better integrate into the global industrial, supply and value chains, thus sharing the benefits of economic globalization.

Analysis: In this sentence, “快车” and “便车” stand for the opportunities brought by China's development. China likes to help other countries. In order to help the developing countries, China has made great efforts. The translation text doesn't change the sentence structure and retains the figure of speech, which is loyal to the content of the original.

Example (9)

ST:

建设持久和平、普遍安全、共同繁荣、开放包容、清洁美丽的世界，让人民过上安宁富足的生活，是各国人民孜孜以求的共同梦想。

TT: It is a common aspiration of the peoples of all countries to build an open, inclusive, clean, and beautiful world that enjoys lasting peace, universal security, and common prosperity, and where everyone lives in peace and plenty.

Analysis: From this example, readers can find that “持久和平、普遍安全、共同繁荣、开放包容、清洁美丽” are four-character phrases as a parallelism, and the target text is “open, inclusive, clean and beautiful”, being the same pattern with the original text, which not only show people's desire to build such a better world, but also follow the rule of fidelity.

#### **4. Conclusion**

China has entered a new era of development. The white paper *China and the World in the New Era* can help the international community better understand China's development. On this very note, the work of translation is of paramount importance, but it is very difficult for us to translate this kind of political text. Skopos theory provides us with a new perspective and plays a great guiding role in the translation of political texts. After an in-depth analysis of *China and the World in the New Era*, the author finds that at the lexical level, repetitive words and phrases unique in Chinese are very typical; at the syntactical level, non-subject sentence and long

sentence are often used; at the rhetorical level, metaphors and parallel sentences are used to convey China's policies and opinions. Under the guidance of three rules of Skopos theory, different translation strategies have been adopted to achieve the communicative function.

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