

Chinese-English Political Materials Research from the Perspective of Cognitive Construal theory-- Taking the 2023 Report on the Work of the Government As an Example

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Abstract:

The English translation of political materials is of great significance for foreign readers to understand Chinese policies, spread Chinese political culture, and establish a positive image of China. Different Chinese political texts also have certain differences in their expression forms and expressive effects under different language scenarios. This paper bases on cognitive construal theory from the perspective of choice of scope, the change of focus, perspective and specificity to analyze *the 2023 Report on the Work of the Government*, aiming to make the translator through cognitive construal theory to explore different cultural background of cognitive differences, thus through the interpretation of the way to meet the target of reader understanding mode of understanding way, to better realize the publicity function and political purpose.

1. Introduction

Political text belongs to one kind of the non-literary text, which has the characteristics of rigorous attitude, firm political stand, concise writing and clear main idea. Its author aims to clarify the political views, give publicity to politics to achieve specific political goal. In general, its content contains: national party leadership speech, large meeting records, national policies and a series of policies content, and *the Report of the Government Work* as a past year national work summary and deployment and outlook for the next year of China, has a typical political text characteristics, so the translator should focus on considering the appropriateness of publicity goal.

Due to the differences of culture and ideology between Chinese and western countries, the influence of different cultural backgrounds on political text translation and language thinking on language expression forms should be emphasized in publicity translation. In translating the material which fully expresses the concept with Chinese characteristics, the the original writing intention and reader acceptability should be considered. Reaching the goal of "publicity

translation", namely: set a positive national image, create a good environment for international public opinion, and make foreigners better understand China by the foreign audience accept habits to enhance the publicity appeal and affinity.^[10]

2. The Cognitive Construal Theory and Its Influence on Translation

2.1 The cognitive construal theory

In cognitive linguistics, scholars often turn the human imagination and description of the same things and situations in different ways into the ability to “recognize and interpret”^[6]. In other words, “construal” is a way in which human beings conceptualize their own experience of things on the basis of specific scenes and express themselves through language. It involves the configuration ^[2] of the relevant scene and the subject perspective. Because different people have different understandings and expressions of different situations and contents, even under the same situation the language expression is different, that is, different people have different ways of "recognition", and the form of language expression based on objective experience will be different. Based on the cognitive grammar framework, Langacker believes that " the meaning of the expression is not only the content of the concept expressed, but also the recognition of the content. The specific recognition of the expression content is a universal semantic value orientation, which is closely related to the specific scene and the specific way of observing the scene." ^[2] So he has divided the “ cognitive construal theory” into four parts: choice of scope, the change of focus, perspective and specificity. Croft defines it as: “The subconscious process of cognitive coding of all aspects of the experience they want to express.”^[1]

2.2 The application of Cognitive Construal theory

Translation is essentially a special cognitive activity, which involves the translator's cognition, understanding and transformation and expression of the original text. In a specific context, the result of translation is the recognition and understanding of the original text and the results of the translated sentences. The differences in the language expression forms between the source language and the target language are also caused by the different ways of recognizing and

understanding of objective things between different nations and countries.

Based on the above understanding of translation from the cognitive perspective, when the translator deals with the source language translation, it is necessary to change the translation according to the cognitive ability of the target language readers. In the transformation process of different recognition methods, the four methods: choice of scope, the change of focus, perspective and specificity may be known with different types. And the similarity of the scene of source language description will be also various. Therefore, translation from the theoretical perspective of construal and interpretation can be divided into: (1) analyzing the understanding of the original text and understanding the author's understanding mode of the specific situation; (2) reconstructing the interpretation of the original text in the translation, to ensure that the translation meets the reader's way of understanding and reading expectations.

3. The Analysis of the 2023 Report on the Work of the Government

The English and Chinese languages analyzed in this paper also have differences in the way of recognition and understanding, and have different effects on the expression mode of the two languages. The author will analyze and discuss the translation of the target translation from the four dimensions of choice of scope, the change of focus, perspective and specificity:

3.1 Choice of scope of cognitive construal theory

In cognitive construal theory, the “choice of scope” refers to the detailed and specific degree of language users describing the same situation.^{[4][7]} In other words, for the same scenario, language users can choose both fine-grained and coarse-grained for observation and description. Fine-grained gets a detailed, specific expression, with a high resolution, while coarse-grained produces a general expression, only a rough description of a situation, this low resolution can only reflect its rough characteristics and overall organization.^[4]

Example 1

ST: 深刻领悟“两个确立”的决定性意义，增强“四个意识”、坚定“四个自信”、做到“两个维护”

TT: ...enhanced their consciousness of the need to maintain political integrity, think in big-picture terms, follow the leadership core, and keep in alignment with the central Party leadership; stayed confident in the path, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics...

In this example the “四个意识” refers to: consciousness of the need to maintain political integrity, think in big-picture terms, follow the leadership core, and keep in alignment with the central Party leadership. In Chinese political texts, it is usually use highly concise and neat rhythm to elaborate policies, slogans and banners to provide convenience for readers to remember. When dealing with English translation, the translator should fully consider the specific factors such as the readers’ understanding of the culture, thought and political development of the source text, and reconstruct the excessively vague and abstract concepts in the source text, so as to make them concrete and clear, to conform the understanding of the readers and facilitate the readers to get the deeper meaning of Chinese political spirit.

3.2 The change of focus of cognitive construal theory

Humans have the cognitive ability to determine the direction and focus of attention while observing an objective. “The change of focus” means that people always focus on one or several attributes of things.^[7] In the actual translation process, the translator can blur the description of the original text information to a certain extent or focus on the situation of the target language to weaken the surrounding factors to eventually achieve the purpose of translation.

Example 2

ST: 建设 288 个基础学科拔尖学生培养基地，接续推进世界一流大学和一流学科建设。

TT: We opened 288 training centers for high-performing students in basic disciplines and continued to develop world-class universities and world-class disciplines.

The meaning of the original text is to promote the development of China's education and talent training in line with the world, and to realize the concept of expanding China's talent market. Considering that there is still a certain gap between the actual education level in China and many developed countries in Europe and the United States, and the current national "cultural hegemony theory" is rampant, if the “世界一流大学和一流学科” is directly translated as "world first-class universities and first-class disciplines" to emphasize its status as the first status in the world, the misunderstanding will inevitably exist. The translation is focus on the word "world", highlight China's desire to cooperate with the world concept, and weakened the meaning of "first-class". By this effort, the target language readers can better understand the China has advocated to the concept of peaceful development and easily get the behind logic relationship.

3.3 Specificity of cognitive construal theory

The specificity refers to the asymmetry phenomenon in different languages. In the progress of using language, users recognize knowledge from certain factors in the objective situation, and adopt different ways to understand certain factors in the situation according to individual subjective judgment factors and different cognitive modes.

Example 3

ST: 我国经济社会发展取得举世瞩目的重大成就。

TT: As a result, we have made major achievements in economic and social development, which garnered recognition around the world.

In English sentence, in order to avoid obscurity between main and semantic sentence. On the contrary, the Chinese sentence structure is different that Chinese prefers to put the main point in the last. In example 5, based on the differences between the two language sentence structure, the translator reconstructed the sentence ——namely to adjust the narrative order of core information “取得重大成就”, to greatly fit the target language readers’ reading habit in information getting, making the translation closer to the target language readers reading habits, finally realizing the purpose of publicity.

3.4 Perspective of cognitive construal theory

According to Langacker's cognitive theory, the cognitive perspective refers to the perspective chosen by human to observe different things in the cognitive process. The perspective includes different aspects, the most obvious of which is vantage point, which refers to where people observe the situation. In addition, the perspective also includes the psychological scanning, which is mainly affected by the subject's subjective cognitive construal of the object.^[6]

Example 4

ST: 合理把握赤字规模。

TT: The deficit was kept at a reasonable level.

In the above example, the action recipient subject of the original text is not clearly expressed and is implied in the high context paragraph. In fact, the subject of this sentence in the original text should be "government", and the executor of the action is “economic deficit”, that is, standing on the perspective of government to control the “deficit”. In this way, the concept of the reasonably controlling the “economic deficit” has been strengthened, making the growing trend of China's economic development and the positive and confident image of the Chinese government,

which commanding the overall national economy, deeply rooted in the mind of the people, and it also send a signal of the active action of the Chinese government.

4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis above, The author draws the following conclusions: (1) in the political text, the four dimensions of choice of scope, the change of focus, perspective and specificity of the cognitive construal theory are widely applied in the construction of the cognitive mode of political text, and actively play an important role; (2) Due to the differences in different languages, such as culture and region, there are certain subjectivity bias existing in the recolonization, so the translator should consider the differences between the source language and target language in all aspects, reconstructing the target translation to better bridge the unequal gap. So that the translation can conform to the reader's cognitive mode to achieve a better political publicity purpose; (3) The cognitive contrual theory has practical meaning in guiding political translation and English political translation study. The cognitive habits and cognitive ways are of great significance for better promoting the political publicity work.

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