Chinese-English Translation of Hard News from the Perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract: The present study is a critical discourse analysis of Chinese-English translation of hard news, intending to disclose the relationship between ideology and hard news translation. Fairclough's three-dimensional model is employed to analyze five hard news reports published on Xinhuanet. Through the comparison of the source texts and their translations, the study finds that the impact of ideology can be observed in various stages of Chinese-English hard news translation, including text, discursive practice and social practice.

1. Introduction

1.1. Definitions of hard news and critical discourse analysis

Hard news is a basic concept coming from western journalism. Bill Kovach defines hard news as "news stories of a timely nature about events or conflicts that have just happened or are about to happen" [1]. This category of news encompasses both reports that are largely based on a communicative event, such as a speech, interview, report, or press release, as well as those that are based on a material event, like an accident, natural catastrophe, riot, or terrorist attack. With the domains of politics and business as primary sources, hard news can serve as an effective tool of ideological dissemination [2].

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is derived from the discipline of "critical linguistics" which focuses upon the interrelations of language, ideology, and power [3]. With Systematic Functional Linguistics as its theoretical basis, CDA sheds light on the relationship between language and social process by analyzing the semantics and formal features of linguistic elements in a discourse[4]. Compared with other theories, CDA puts more emphasis on identifying the invisible workings of ideologies embedded in features of discourse which are often taken for granted. Aimed at revealing the hidden ideology and power behind the discourse, the approaches of CDA provide a powerful tool to analyze the ideological factors in hard news translation. CDA is also a theory of practical significance, for it aims to raise people's "language awareness" which enables them to better cope with the intervention of social factors in the use of language [3]. Therefore, for both translators and readers, a news translation study guided by the theory of CDA can help enhance their capacity to the identify the underlying ideological factors in news texts. Fairclough's three-dimensional model is a frequently used analytical framework of CDA (as shown in Figure 1) :
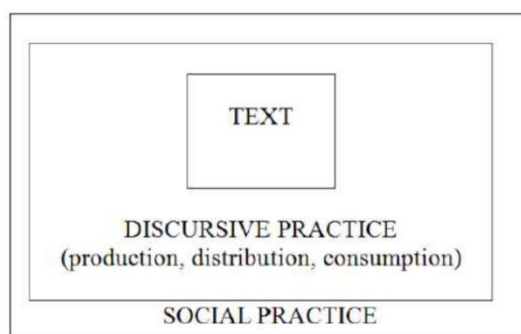
Figure 1: Three-dimensional conception of discourse (Fairclough, 1992: 73)

The model shows that text is a product of discursive practice which consists of production, distribution and consumption of the text. Both the text and discursive practice dimension are subject to social practice [5]. Corresponding with these three dimensions, Fairclough proposes three stages of critical discourse analysis: description, interpretation and explanation. Description deals with formal properties of the text, such as vocabulary, grammar, textual structure and so forth. For description, critical linguistics draw heavily on Halliday's work in "systematic grammar". Compared with other approaches, CDA gives more attention to the grammar and vocabulary of the text. Interpretation is concerned with participants' processes of text production and text interpretation. Proceeding in an automatic and unconscious way, these processes play a significant role in determining ideological effectiveness. Explanation places the processes of production and interpretation in social context, and explores their social determination and social effects. This is underpinned by the notion that A piece of discourse is embedded within sociocultural practice at various levels: in the immediate situation, in the wider institution or organization, and at the societal level [6].

1.2. Previous studies on ideology in news translation

The literature on ideology in news translation has attracted a fair amount of attention. Despite differences in presentation, the major findings of these studies share some similarities. Most scholars enquire into the role of ideology in news translation [7]. They argue that in news translation, ideology can not only affect the diction and linguistic form of the original news texts, but also exert a considerable impact on the translators' interpretation of the source text and their translation strategies, thus affecting the transmission of message. Therefore, it is necessary for the translator to identify the underlying ideological factors in the language of the original news text, and select appropriate strategies to ensure that the translation conforms to the mainstream cultural and ideological requirements of the target language society and the cognitive expectations of the target readers. Based on these findings, some scholars further explore the strategies adopted in news translation in accordance with different ideological factors [8]. For example, Jia points out that the influence of ideology on translation of Chinese-related terms can be reflected by foreignization strategy as well as manipulation and mistranslation of the target language [9]. Xu carries out a comparative analysis of news texts from American newspapers such as New York Times and their Chinese translations by Reference News (*Cankaoxiaoxi*), an official newspaper in China, to examine how ideology is transformed in news translation by means of naming, overlexicalization and relexicalization[10].

In terms of materials, most of the authors select foreign media's translation of Chinese news, or Chinese media's translation of news reported by foreign media, which means most of these studies fix attention on cases in which the ideologies of the news reporter and the translator are different. The comparative study of Chinese news texts and their English translations from the same Chinese news media platform remains nearly an uncharted area.

With regard to theories, the most commonly used theory to examine the relationship between ideology and news translation is Lefevere's Manipulation Theory, or Rewriting Theory, which analyzes the whole process of translation from three aspects of ideology, poetics and patronage[11]. Some studies, however, do not involve a clear theoretical framework [7][8]. It is also noticeable that the approaches of critical discourse analysis (CDA) are rarely adopted in the existing studies of news translation.

1.3. Contents and objectives of the present study

Since hard news translation is not merely a switch between two languages but under the control of various factors among which ideology is one of the most influential forces, the critical discourse analysis of hard news translation is worth studying. The present study, backed up by the theories of CDA, probes into the relationship between ideology and hard news translation. Unlike most of the existing literature, this thesis will look at journalistic texts from Chinese official news website Xinhuanet and their English translations published on the same platform, in which the news reporter and the translator represent the same ideology. Additionally, the topic of the selected texts is human rights, a disputable issue which attracts considerable international concern over the years. With the guidance of Fairclough's three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis, this study investigates the relationship between ideology and hard news translation at three levels, including text, discursive practice and social practice. The objective of this study is to explore how the two different systems of language convey the same ideology in different ways to fit with the ideology of the different target readers, and figure out the interrelations between formal features of texts and the production of hard news translation, as well as the specific social context.

This thesis is composed of three chapters. Chapter 1 gives a general introduction to key definitions, previous studies as well as the content and objectives of the present study. Chapter 2, the main body of the thesis, presents the critical discourse analysis of hard news translation through descriptive study of the selected texts from three dimensions - description, interpretation and explanation. Chapter 3 is the conclusion which summarizes the major findings, discusses the limitations of the present study and gives suggestions for future research.

2. Critical Discourse Analysis of Chinese-English Translation of Hard News Texts

This chapter is accomplished by applying CDA to the case study of Chinese-English translation of hard news texts within the framework of Fairclough's three-dimensional model. This thesis focuses on 5 hard news reports on human rights and their translations on Xinhuanet, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Selected Hard News Reports

Text Number	Publication date	Title
1	26 Feb, 2022	Xi Focus: Xi stresses firm adherence to China's path of human rights development
2	21 May, 2022	China Focus: China makes historic achievements in human rights protection
3	24 May, 2022	Chinese FM meets UN human rights chief
4	25 May, 2022	China saddened by Texas school shooting, urges U.S. to effectively protect human rights: FM spokesperson
5	28 May, 2022	Chinese vice foreign minister briefs media on visit of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to China

2.1. Description

In the stage of description, the comparative analysis of Chinese hard news texts and their English translations is carried out from the perspectives of transformation and modality. The objective is to explore how the translator transfer the linguistic forms to fit with the ideology of the target readers, and how these differences in linguistic form might affect the readers' interpretation of the text.

2.1.1. Transformation

In critical linguistics, the meaning of transformation should be comprehended in light of the nature of a discourse, context and purpose [12]. Sometimes transformation represents the changing process of ideology in a discourse. In the observation of transformation, special attention should be fixed upon nominalization and passivization.

2.1.1.1. Nominalization

Nominalization refers to the use of noun phrases to denote the events that can be represented by a verb structure or sentence. It can weaken the sense of motion of the discourse by turning "processes and activities into states and objects, and concretes into abstracts" [5]. For example: (as shown in Table2)

Table 2: An Example of Nominalization in the Selected Texts

	ST	TT
(1a)	坚持中国×××；坚持尊重×××；×××从×××出发；坚持×××；×××保障×××；×××参与×××。	upholding the Party's leadership, respecting the people's principal position, proceeding from national realities, upholding the rights to subsistence and development as the primary and basic human rights, safeguarding human rights in accordance with the law, and participating in global governance on human rights.
(1b)	×××强调，要积极推动×××，弘扬×××，推动×××。	Xi stressed actively promoting global governance on human rights, upholding the common values of humanity, and advancing the global governance on human rights in a fairer, more equitable, rational and inclusive direction.

In these sentences, the verbs in the source texts, such as "坚持", "保障" and "推动", are translated into nouns as "upholding", "safeguarding" and "promoting" in the target texts. These two different ways of expressing the same events produce different effects on readers with different ideologies. According to Xin, the use of noun phrases in replacement of verb structures can effectively reduce the sense of motion of the discourse, thus creating an "impersonal" tone[4]. Through the use of phrases with a strong sense of motion, the original Chinese texts emphasize the efforts made by Communist Party of China (CPC) for human rights protection and imply China's determination to advance its cause of human rights. Whereas, the noun phrases in the English versions transform the actions and processes into a description of states, thus making the statements in target texts sound

more impersonal and less imposing for target readers who might not have strong identification with Chinese policies.

2.1.1.2 Passivization

Passivization allows for the omission of the agent, though this may itself be variously motivated by the fact that the agent is self-evident, irrelevant or unknown. According to Xin, passivization serves as an effective means to achieve the effect of thematization. By placing the object at the beginning of the sentence, it highlights the message conveyed by this component as a marked theme [3].Such phenomena abound in the translation of hard news texts on human rights (as shown in Table3):

Table 3: Examples of Passivization in the Selected Texts

	ST	TT
(1c)	城镇<u>新增</u>就业人口×××。↵	On average, 13 million new urban jobs <u>were created</u> annually in recent years.
(1d)	公共×××不断<u>优化</u>，×××。↵	Improvements <u>have been made</u> in the public culture service system covering both cities and villages, ensuring people's rights in the cultural arena.
(1e)	要<u>努力实现</u>××××。↵	More efforts <u>are needed</u> to achieve development of higher quality, efficiency, equity, sustainability and security, so as to provide strong safeguards for the advancement of human rights.

In these examples, the translators change the active voice in the sources texts into passive voice to shift the object into the prominent position at the beginning of the sentence, thus realizing the effect of thematization. In sentences (1c) and (1d), the marked themes, "urban jobs" and "improvements", emphasize China's remarkable progress in respecting and protecting human rights. In sentence (1e), the word "efforts" acts as the marked theme, underlining the importance and necessity of safeguarding the advancements of human rights. In this way, the adoption of passivization enables international readers, who might not be familiar with the human rights conditions in China, to grasp the key points in the statements more easily and better understand the ideological significance of the texts.

2.1.2 Modality

Modality is often employed to fulfill the interpersonal function of language. There are two purposes of analyzing modality in a discourse: One is to figure out the degree of the speaker's responsibility on the authenticity of the discourse proposition and to identify the obligation undertaken by the speaker for future behavior; the other is to understand the speaker's attitude toward the audience as well as the social distance and power relations between the speaker and the audience. [3]. In the selected texts, the functions of modality are reflected mainly through the translation of modal verbs and personal pronouns.

2.1.2.1 Modal verbs

Modality is expressed mainly by modal auxiliary verbs, such as "may", "might", "must", "should" and "can". According to Fairclough, through the use of modal auxiliary verbs, the implicit authority

claims and implicit power relations are illustrated, thus making modality a matter of ideological interest[6].

In the selected source texts, modal auxiliary verb "要" is frequently used to signal obligation, but it is translated into different English counterparts in different contexts: (as shown in Table4):

Table 4: The Translation of "要" in the Selected Texts

	ST	TT
(2a)	×××，要结合××××。↵	The features are also experience that should be further upheld and developed in the context of new practices.
(2b)	××强调要加强××××。↵	The legal protection for human rights should be strengthened to fully cover the whole process of legislation, law enforcement, administration of justice, and observance of the law, Xi stressed.
(2c)	全球人权治理要由各国×××，××× 要由×××。↵	Global human rights governance must be conducted through dialogue and consultation, and the achievements of human rights development must be shared by the people of all countries.

In (2a) and (2b), the modal verb "要" indicates China's will and determination in improving its governance and management in all aspects of human rights development. Moreover, it may also lead to the expectation of a further developed human rights cause under the guidance of CPC, which can be accepted easily by Chinese readers. However, for international readers who are not familiar with these policies, the selection of modal verbs might have potential impacts on their understanding. Accordingly, the word "要" in this sentence translated into "should", which represents "what is the right or sensible things to do" [13]. In this way, the English sentences display the correct path of China's human rights development to target readers.

In (2b), "要" is translated into "must", which has "the highest degree of request and obligation" [13]. It is clear that the modal auxiliary verb "must" in this sentence emphasize the great significance and necessity of international cooperation in the advancement of global human rights governance. Moreover, it also serves as an appeal for international community to make joint efforts for human rights development.

In other cases, the modal verbs in the source texts are transformed into non-modal forms to produce the expected effects. For example (as shown in Table5):

Table 5: Examples of Non-modal Forms in the Selected Texts

	ST	TT
(2d)	发展×××要坚持×××，×××。↵	In terms of promoting international human rights progress, Wang called for adhering to mutual respect and avoiding politicization of human rights.
(2e)	×××说，××应当尽快采取×××。	…Wang said, also urging the U.S. side to take effective measures to protect the lives of the American people and ensure that they enjoy the right and freedom from fear, gun violence and racial discrimination.

In these examples, the modal verbs "要" and "应当" are translated into non-modal verbs "called

for" and "urging" which represent categorial truths without the sort of intermediate modalities. However, the speakers' underlying attitudes and inclinations can still be understood through these verbs which contains certain emotional tendencies. In news report, the prevalence of categorical modalities supports a view of the world as transparent- as if it signaled its own meaning to any observer, without the need for interpretation and representation[6].

2.1.2.2 Personal pronouns

Personal pronoun is another effective way of expressing modality. The selection of personal pronouns is subject to the social status, power relations and the degree of intimacy between communicators [14].

In the selected texts, the modal function of personal pronouns is fulfilled mainly through the translation of first-person pronouns. For example (as shown in Table 6):

Table 6. The Translation of First-person Pronoun in the Selected Texts

(2f)	我们坚持×××，×××。↵	China has effectively combated COVID-19 to protect the health and safety of the people to the greatest extent possible.
(2g)	目前，我国已建立×××。↵	China has established a comprehensive legal system for protecting the rights and interests of women and children, including more than 100 laws and regulations.

In these examples, different words are used in the source texts and the target texts when referring to China. The first-person pronoun "我国" or the noun phrase "我们" which contains a first-person pronoun is translated into "China" in the English versions. However, it is often translated into "China" in the English versions. According to Xin, the use of first-person pronouns can shorten the distance between the reader and writer [3]. Since the readers of the source texts are Chinese, first-person pronouns like "我国" or "我们" give readers a sense of participation and satisfaction when they read about the country's achievements in human rights. In contrast, the third-person singular "China" sounds impersonal in tone, which enables the target readers to look at the authentic situation of China's human rights cause from an objective perspective.

2.2 Interpretation

The stage of interpretation will probe into the discursive practice of the Chinese- English translation of hard news texts from the perspective of interdiscursivity. The approach of interdiscursivity specifies what discourse types are drawn upon in the discourse sample under analysis [5]. The objective of this section is to examine how the features of the selected texts and their translations be compatible with the text production and text consumption of this genre.

Corresponding with its definition, hard news possesses striking features of timeliness, accuracy, brevity and clarity[15]. These features are maintained in the translation of the selected texts through the choice of accurate words, the use of simple language, and the adoption of proper style. Both of the original Chinese versions and their English translations consist of the authoritative categorical assertions which hard news typically make about events, despite the fact that such events are usually of uncertain character and open to various interpretations.

The rhetorical mode of hard news reports is information giving. In the process of news dissemination, the news giver is constructed as the source of knowledge and information, and the

reader as a passive recipient. As the main communication platform of all-media news in China, Xinhuanet aims to provide authoritative information about China for global netizens. In order to produce the communicative effect in the context of target language, adaption is required in the translation of news reports to fit with the receptivity of international readers, which is largely affected by the differences between Chinese and western ideologies. As discussed in the description stage, such adaption can be observed through the differences between the selected pieces and their translations in terms of transformation and modality. Additionally, the translator, who is directly engaged in the production of the news translation, should be sensitive to the ideological factors hidden in the formal features of the original news reports. It is necessary to adopt appropriate strategies to enhance the readability of translations, thus effectively transmitting the information and ideology of the original texts.

2.3 Explanation

The stage of explanation analyzes discourses as social practice. This section looks at the relationship between Chinese-English translation of hard news texts and ideology in specific social and political context. Fairclough contextualizes ideologies in the construction of reality (the physical world, social relations, social identities) which penetrates into various dimensions of discursive practices. Ideology in Chinese-English translation of hard news is no exception [[5].

With the continuous enhancement of China's comprehensive national strength, the international community has been paying close attention to the development of China. At the same time, however, the prevailing anti-China media hype and propaganda has generated misunderstanding of China in western society. In the field of human rights, China's efforts have been widely recognized in the international community. Nevertheless, some western countries constantly impose arbitrary sanctions on China for so-called human rights violations, and amplify them by portraying China in a bad light through media. Such ideologically and politically driven leverages definitely hinder the international community from knowing the reality of human rights development in China.

The construction of China's international discourse system is of great significance for the transmission of national image. Since the main news media in China serves as key sources of information, the translation of news reports, especially hard news which covers ideological contents, plays an important role in the construction of international discourse system, for it provides a channel for international readers to see a real China. In this sense, the translator is responsible for maintaining China's national image and representing the clear political stance of China in the target texts. A high-quality translation will give a better understanding to target readers of China, thus realizing the dissemination effect of Chinese-English translation of hard news.

3. Conclusion

This chapter makes a summary of the present study, including major findings and relevant limitations, and suggestions for future studies.

3.1 Major findings

Through a critical discourse analysis of Chinese hard news reports on human rights and their English translations, it is found that the interactions between language and ideology can be reflected at various aspects of Chinese-English translation of hard news, which can be summarized as follows:

In terms of text, the original Chinese texts and their English translations differ in formal features when representing the same ideology. In translation, language forms, including transformation and modality, are converted based on ideological differences between Chinese and Western readers.

With regard to discursive practice, the interdiscursivity of hard news translation accounts for the formal features discussed at text level. Subject to discursive factors including the style and rhetorical mode of hard news reports as well as the role of Xinhuanet as a communication platform, the production of hard news translation is aimed at realizing the communicative effects in the context of target language. Therefore, directly engaged in the production process, the translator should employ adaption strategies in translation to cater for the target readers' acceptance. In reference to social practice, ideology exerts a considerable impact on Chinese-English translation of hard news in the specific social and political context of China. Accordingly, it is important to produce high-quality translations of hard news to maintain China's national image.

3.2 Limitations and suggestions

The first limitation lies in the limited size of sample. The present study examines only six hard news texts from a single platform. As a result, in the description stage, the formal features of the Chinese-English hard news translation cannot be discussed comprehensively, some other conversions of language forms, such as classification and transitivity, is not obvious in the selected pieces.

The second limitation results from the nature of CDA. As a multidisciplinary approach featuring flexibility, CDA is employed in various fields. However, flexibility inevitably comes with vagueness and uncertainty in analyzing process. Therefore, CDA is often criticized as being all up to the analysts to decide to interpret the data and decide the depth of their studies. A research using CDA is likely to "further the researcher's own ideological agenda, rather than the agenda of the disempowers" [16].

For future studies, one possible direction is to involve corpus in the critical discourse analysis of Chinese-English translation of hard news. Since corpus linguistics is excel at doing quantitative studies, corpus-based researches would be instrumental in the analysis of Chinese-English translation of had news with a large amount of texts to be studied, thus to a large extent making up for the limitations of the present study. Furthermore, in the stage of description, a questionnaire aimed at the responses of target readers can be involved as empirical evidences, so as to minimize the vagueness and subjectivity of the argumentation.

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