On C-E Translation of Headlines of Short Current News Commentary Programs: A Case Study of *China Mosaic*

Xiao Qun, Zhan Kejia

School of Foreign Languages, Applied Translation Research Center of Transportation and Engineering, East China Jiaotong University, Nanchang, Jiangxi, China

Abstract: This paper takes headlines of each episode of *China Mosaic* in 2020 and 2021 as a case to study C-E translation of headlines of short current news commentary programs. This paper first briefly describes characteristics of Chinese and English headlines of this programme, then uses data analysis method based on the number of words (characters) and bytes of headlines to study headline translation, and finally discusses translation methods and techniques of headlines in terms of the translation of verses, idioms, four-character structures and numbers, shortening in translation, and the translation under differentiated principle towards domestic and foreign recipients.

1. Introduction

In recent years, China's mainstream media have been launching innovative news products to spread China's voice and tell China's stories to the world. Among them, *China Mosaic* launched by *China.com* has been widely watched and praised overseas. This is a short current news commentary programme with mobile phone users as its main audience, while mobile phones have different characteristics from traditional media, so it has become a necessity to study the translation of short current news commentary programs in the new media.

At present, most scholars on news headline translation mainly study print media news[1-2], and only very few scholars study three-dimensional media news[3-4]. Among research on news headline translation, studies of current news commentary programs have not yet received the attention of the academic community. Moreover, translation studies of *China Mosaic* need to be expanded. Therefore, the author takes *China Mosaic* as an example to conduct a translation study on headlines of short current news commentary program to explore translation methods and techniques.

2. Introduction to China Mosaic and Its Headline Characteristics

2.1 Introduction to *China Mosaic*

China Mosaic is a 3-minute Chinese and English short current news commentary program created by the national key news website *China.com*. Each 3-minute story is compared to a piece of mosaic, which can be accumulated to form a complete image of China. This programme focuses on hot events, spreads China's voice and responds to international concerns, helping to enhance China's international communication influence and strengthen its cultural soft power[5]. With its convenient viewing, moderate length, focused information and diversified presentation, *China Mosaic* is suitable for the needs of viewers in today's fragmented and shallow reading era, and is therefore well received by audience.

2.2 Headline Characteristics of *China Mosaic*

The headline has two main functions: conveying information and expressing a point of view. A good headline attracts viewers' attention and thus increases the viewership, so headlines of news programmes are very important. The Chinese and English headlines of *China Mosaic* have different characteristics, and understanding differences between them is the basis of headline translation research. 98 episodes were broadcast in 2020 and 2021, and characteristics of their headlines are

summarized as follows.

Chinese headlines make good use of four-character structures, including idioms, familiar phrases and free phrases; they habitually use rhetorical devices, mainly including metaphor and simile, contrast, and rhyme; verses and couplets are also often found; and the language is loose and lengthy, with ornate diction.

English headlines mostly use nouns; they are used to express past events in the present tense and express future events with verb infinitives; they focus on the omission of words, e.g. the linking verb *be* is often omitted and abbreviations are used; they focus on stating news facts and the language is simple and plain.

3. Analysis of C-E Headline Translation of China Mosaic

3.1 Analysis of Headline Translation Based on the Number of Words (Characters) and Bytes

The main audience of *China Mosaic* is mobile phone users, and the number of words displayed in one line on mobile phones is limited; too many words bring word wrap, which is not conducive to viewers to get the key information in a short time and reduce their interest of watching the programme. Therefore, the analysis of the number of words (characters) and bytes in Chinese and English headlines are of great significance to translation research. Generally speaking, for Chinese, taking the headline of an article on WeChat Offical Accounts as an example, a line on a phone usually displays up to 20 characters; for English, taking the headline of a video on YouTube as an example, a line on a phone usually displays up to 41 bytes.

The author uses Excel to analyze the number of words (characters) and bytes in Chinese and English headlines of 98 episodes, as shown in Figure 1. The author inputs the formula "=LEN(A2)" and "=LENB(A2)" to calculate the number of Chinese characters and bytes of A2 respectively, and inputs the formula "=LEN(B2)" and "=LEN(B2)-LEN(SUBSTITUTE(B2," ",""))+1" to calculate the number of English bytes and words of B2 respectively. In this way, the data of all cells can be got.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Chinese headlines	English headlines	Chinese characters	Chinese bytes	English words	English bytes
2	他在线吃扒鸡的样子 可真美	Chinese county chief hosts live streaming for chicken selling	13	25	9	61
3	这些好听的汉语名 藏着中国的航天情怀	Space mission names embody Chinese romanticism	18	35	6	46
4	中国人看春晚, 看的是什么?	Behind the most-watched program in the world	13	26	7	44
5	共克时艰 中国打响疫情阻击战	China goes all out to combat coronovirus outbreak	14	27	8	49
6	抗击新冠肺炎: 岂曰无衣 与子同袍	Battling the novel coronavirus: United we stand	16	31	7	47
7	面对疫情 人类应有相通的悲喜	Mankind should share sorrows when facing COVID-19	14	27	7	49
8	疫情下的中国经济: 逆水行舟 迎难而上	China counters economic fallout from coronavirus	18	35	6	48
9	聚焦长沙复工复产 中国经济转危为机按下加速键	Chinese economy back on track: Changsha as an example	22	43	9	53
10	中国开展 "无接触式" 教学 一些变化正在发生	Contactless education' spurs on online learning amid outbreak	21	41	8	61

Figure 1 Partial Screenshot in Excel

The author then calculates the maximum, minimum and average value of the number of words (characters) and bytes in Chinese and English headlines. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Data Analysis of Chinese and English Headlines

	Chinese characters	Chinese bytes	English words	English bytes
Max	26	52	12	71
Min	8	16	5	26
Average	16.9	32.8	7.9	52.6

Finally, the author analyses all the data in detail and finds that nearly one-fifth of Chinese headlines exceed the 20-character limit and are displayed as two lines on mobile phones, which is mainly due to the high number of Chinese characters. Nearly half of Chinese headlines' characters are higher than the average, with each headline containing at least two punctuation marks or spaces, and in some cases as many as six. In addition, only three of the Chinese headlines do not contain spaces or punctuation marks, and the number of characters in them is less than the average. This

shows that punctuation and spaces are important reasons for the high number of characters in Chinese headlines.

As to English headlines, 87 (nearly 90%) headlines exceed the limit of 41 bytes in one line of the mobile phone, indicating that the translation is not concise enough. The author selects 56 headlines whose bytes number are higher than the average for analysis, and finds that each headline contains an average of 8.6 words, a value greater than the average number of words in all English headlines of 7.9. These English headlines with more bytes are mainly due to the use of more words and the resulting increase in spaces, or not many words but longer words, like hyphenated words.

In terms of punctuation, the number of quotation marks is reduced in English headlines, reflecting the reduction in the number of bytes in the translation, but there is a mix use of single and double quotation marks, which should be unified. The number of colons is increased in English headlines, showing that the translator is more limited to the form of the source text in the translation.

3.2 Headline Translation Methods and Techniques

3.2.1 Translation of Verses, Idioms and Four-character Structures

Chinese culture is extensive and profound, and Chinese people love to quote poems and idioms and use four-character structures. Here, 5 groups of Chinese and English headlines containing verses, idioms and four-character structures are selected for analysis, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Translation of Verses, Idioms and Four-character Structures

No.	Pinyin	English headlines	translation methods & techniques
1	*yi miao jie zhong: guo lv zao sheng du xing he zuo;*	Vaccines: More cooperation, less speculation	paraphrase+shift
2	*zhong guo ying yuan chong qi: bo yun jian ri zhong you shi;*	Cinemas reopen across China after unprecedented closure	omission+addition
3	*yuan long ping xian sheng: shi zhi bu yi xin huai tian xia de ren zhe;*	Yuan Longping: With benevolence, for humanity	omission+shift
4	*kang ji xin guan fei yan: qi yue wu yi yu zi tong pao;*	Battling the novel coronavirus: United we stand	idiomatic translation
5	*you shi san chao gu du kan shi si yun sheng hui;*	National Games inject new vitality into ancient capital	recreation

Paraphrase is one of the most common methods of translation. The verb phrases "*guo lv zao sheng du xing he zuo*" in No.1 call on people to reduce unnecessary speculation about vaccines and to strengthen their belief in cooperation against the epidemic. Since nouns are often used in English headlines, the verb phrases are converted into the noun structure "More cooperation, less speculation" in translation. In addition, "more" and "less" are in contrast, and "cooperation" and "speculation" have the same rhyme "-tion".

Omission is used in the translation of No. 2 and 3. In No.2, the verse "*bo yun jian ri zhong you shi*" here means cinemas in China finally break through the darkness and see the light. However, it is omitted in translation. To make up for the lack of information, "after unprecedented closure" is added, which facilitates the audience's understanding. In No.3, "*shi zhi bu yi xin huai tian xia de ren zhe*" is translated into "With benevolence, for humanity". "benevolence" means "*ren ci*" and "humanity" means "*ren lei*", so it can be seen that "*shi zhi bu yi*" is omitted. Meanwhile, the original attributive structure is converted into a prepositional phrase, making the structure clear and easy to understand.

In addition to the above methods, the translator also adopts idiomatic translation and recreation.

In No.4, the verse "*qi yue wu yi yu zi tong pao*" comes from *The Book of Songs*. Here it refers to the unity of the Chinese people and the international community's solidarity in the fight against the epidemic. The translator uses an idiomatic phrase "United we stand" to replace the original verse. Using a proverb with a similar meaning evokes a sense of affinity with target readers and arouses their interest.

In No.5, "*you shi san chao gu du kan shi si yun sheng hui*" is a typical Chinese verse, referring to a visit to Xi'an, once the capital of 13 dynasties in ancient China, to watch the grand 14th National Games. If all the information is translated, the headline will be too long. The translator adopts recreation method, abandoning the meaning and form of the original text and creatively re-processing it but retaining the important information "National Games" and "ancient capital"[6]. Meanwhile, the translator adds "new vitality", which corresponds to the lively and grand event and enriches the connotation. Moreover, "new" and "ancient" are in contrast, making up for the couplet in the original form.

3.2.2 Translation of Numbers

When the concept of numbers has news reading value and is an important part of the most dominant news facts, numbers in headlines can serve to reinforce the topic and attract readers' attention[7]. Therefore, attention should be paid to the translation of numbers. Here, the author mainly analyses the translation of cardinal and ordinal numerals, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Translation of Numbers

No.	Chinese headlines	English headlines	translation methods & techniques
1	*75 nian lian he guo: duo bian dui hua he zuo gong ying;*	UN at 75: Multilateral dialogue and win-win cooperation	zero translation
2	*600 sui gu gong: "gu" er "xin";*	Palace Museum at 600: Old palace, new vitality	zero translation
3	*xiao kang she hui zhong guo ren de qian nian su yuan;*	Xiaokang society: A long-cherished wish of Chinese people	free translation
4	*shi jie zhi neng da hui di wu nian: zhan zai chuang xin de chao tou;*	5th WIC: At the forefront of innovation	literal translation
5	*di shi si ge "wu nian": wu nian gui hua jie shi zhong guo fa zhan ao mi;*	Five-year plans: The secret to China's development	literal translation+omission

As can be seen from the table above, whether numbers are translated or not, or which method of translation is adopted, depends on the circumstances.

The numbers in No. 1 and 2 are specific time and they are central elements of the headlines, therefore they cannot be omitted in translation. These numbers are in the form of Arabic numerals, so the translator adopts zero translation method; the word "*qian nian*" in No. 3 makes a general reference to "long time". "*su yuan*" refers to a wish that has always been held. Therefore, "*qian nian su yuan*" is translated into "long-cherished wish". This is free translation.

No. 4 and 5 involve the translation of ordinal numerals. The core event of No. 4 is the 5th World Intelligence Congress, and this ordinal numeral is critical, so it is translated literally; No. 5 contains one ordinal numeral and two cardinal numerals. The translator translates "*wu nian gui hua*" literally but omits "*di shi si ge wu nian*" because the content after the colon in the headline is the main idea, and also "di shi si ge wu nian" refers to 2021-2025, a crucial period for China's economic and social development, which may not be clear to foreigners, so it is omitted to avoid confusion and save space.

3.2.3 Shortening in Translation

Abbreviations are commonly found in headlines. English abbreviations include initialisms, blends, clipped words and Latin abbreviations[8]. No Latin abbreviations are found in the 98 headlines studied, while the remaining types of abbreviations are all covered.

Initialisms are mostly used in translating proper nouns such as organizations and important conferences, like "*lian he guo*" is "UN", "*shi jie zhi neng da hui di wu nian*" is "5th WIC", etc. Some place names are well known to target readers, so they are often translated into initialisms, like "*xiang gang*" is "HK", while less well known place names are translated into their full names, like "*cheng du*" is "Chengdu". In addition, although "*xiang gang*" appears several times in the headlines, it is not translated as an initialism all the times. Sometimes long headlines do not use abbreviations, so this is not related to the space but to the translation habits of different translators, but it would be better if the translations of the same words remained consistent.

There is a kind of abbreviation that is made up of the halves of several connected words, i.e. blends, which are commonly found in scientific and technological terms, like "*ke huan*" is translated into "Sci-fi", which is made up of the first halves of "science" and "fiction"; Finally, clipped words are mostly words whose endings are clipped, like "*zhi neng ke ji*" is translated into "smart tech", and "tech" is derived from the word "technology".

3.2.4 Translation under differentiated principle towards domestic and foreign recipients.

The differentiated principle towards domestic and foreign recipients is a major principle of international publicity translation, which means that "translators should fully consider the target audience, clarify which statements in the original text are used domestically and which can be used for international publicity, and do not blindly copy the content and form of the original text"[9]. Under this principle, sometimes translators need to specify key information and delete secondary information in translation, which is beneficial to the target audience to better understand the content of the programme. Two specific examples are as follows.

Example 1: *ta zai xian chi pa ji de yang zi ke zhen mei*

Target text: Chinese county chief hosts live streaming for chicken selling

This episode was released on 9 January 2020, when the video "Shanghe County Governor Sells Braised Chicken Live" was going viral. Chinese people at the time could easily guess who "*ta*" refers to and what the programme is about. If the headline had been translated literally as "He is really beautiful when he eats chicken online", foreigners would have been confused and would not have the same association as Chinese people because they do not know this event. Therefore, instead of literal translation, the translator specifies "*ta*" as "Chinese county chief" and "*zai xian chi pa ji*" as "hosts live streaming for chicken selling", while removing the secondary information "*ke zhen mei*" to make it easier for foreign viewers to understand.

Example 2: *zhe xie hao ting de han yu ming cang zhe zhong guo de hang tian qing huai*

Target text: Space mission names embody Chinese romanticism

This episode was released on 17 January 2020. The previous two months witnessed many major events in Chinese spaceflight, and Chinese people also marvelled at romantic names of space achievements. Names like "*que qiao*", "*chang e*" and "*yu tu*" are all derived from ancient Chinese myths and legends, therefore Chinese people are touched when they see this headline. However, foreigners are very unfamiliar with them, so they may not appreciate the beauty of these names. If they see a literal translation, they may mistakenly think that "*han yu ming*" refers to the names of certain people and these names contain space elements, so literal translation is improper. The translator specifies "*han yu ming*" as "space mission names" and "*qing huai*" as "romanticism" and meanwhile omits the secondary information "*hao ting de*" to make it clear to readers and the value of international publicity is realized.

4. Conclusion

Although most of the English headlines of *China Mosaic* are long and there are a few cases of

mixed use of punctuation and inconsistent translation, its translation methods and techniques still have certain reference value for C-E translation of headlines of short current news commentary programs. This also shows that when translating headlines of short current news commentary programs in the new media, one should analyse characteristics of Chinese and English news headlines, take into account the limit of the number of words per line in mobile phones, and flexibly use translation methods and techniques, so as to realize the value of international publicity.

Acknowledgement

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