

# A Study of News Translation From the Perspective of the Manipulation Theory

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Aiming to improve Chinese to English news translation, this study chooses as object the translation of news on *China Daily*, a news outlet in China. Through analyzing the pros and cons of selected text under the guidance of the manipulation theory, it is found that the translator must take into account the three main factors, which are ideology, patronage, and poetics while translating Chinese news into English.

*Keywords:* manipulation theory, news translation, ideology

## Introduction

As the pioneer of the manipulation school, Lefevere (2004, p. 3) wrote: "Translation is, of course, a rewriting of an original text". This is especially applicable to news translation. As a type of text, news is unique in translation field. Hence, translating news can run counter to the traditional translation values.

Currently, the exchange between China and foreign countries keeps growing, so does the demand of news translation. However, the quality of news translation in China drastically varies. Normally, professional media like *China Daily* and the *Reference News* can produce high-quality E-C translation; whereas the majority of portals of universities and organizations in China provide very poor C-E translation. News is an important medium to shape a country's international image. Unfortunately, the saying has long been dominated by western media with prejudice caused by ideological difference. The facts that foreigner's perception of China is mainly built on these biased western reports and that China voice is hardly heard push it into a disadvantaged position. Therefore, to make its voice heard by the international community, tremendous efforts should be made to improve C-E news translation.

Aiming to improve C-E news translation, this study chooses as object the translation of news on *China Daily*, an English news outlet in China. Detailing analyses will be carried out from the perspective of the manipulation theory to figure out how translators make appropriate adjustment to meet the needs of Chinese reader. All of these examples chosen are edited and translated from American or British news outlets.

## Literature Review

### Lefevere's Manipulation Theory

In 1980s, André Lefevere systematically came up with the manipulation view in translation, marking the

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formation of the school of manipulation whose core argument of the school is that translation practice is manipulated by ideology and poetics in target language. As Lefevere put it, translation is a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and therefore manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. He believed that “translation needs to be studied in connection with power and patronage, ideology and poetics, with emphasis on the various attempts to shore up or undermine an existing ideology or an existing poetics” (Lefevere, 2004, p. 24).

At the end of the 20th century, Lefevere’s manipulation theory was introduced into China (Zhang, 2008). Since then, it has been widely used in domestic translation activities and studies, of which most apply the theory into case studies. For instance, Li Xueying (2010), based on Lefevere’s manipulation theory, studied and compared the two Chinese versions of *Pride and Prejudice* from the perspective of social culture, and revealed the impact of ideology, patronage, and mainstream poetics on translators’ translation view and translation strategies in different historical times.

All in all, the manipulation theory was originated in the west. Through decades of development, the three mainly factors—patronage, ideology, and poetics—are widely recognized, and since it was introduced into China, many Chinese scholars have conducted translation researches on the basis of the three factors. Although the manipulation theory is designed to instruct literary translation, to break ideological obstacles is also crucial to news translation.

### **Studies on News Translation**

News translation is an important activity of cross-culture communication. Despite the long history during which people have practiced news translation, the studies on news translation only came up for a relative short period of time (Cheng, 2013). Stetting (1989) firstly introduced the term “transediting”. Yves Gambier (2006), a Finnish scholar, argued that news transediting is a reconstruction to reality that has already been constructed and that the process is subject to institute and cultural background.

Many researchers on news translation in China pay attention to studies on transediting coverages from western news outlets concerning China. For instance, Cheng Wei (2010) examines the translated news reporting on combating H1N1 spreading in China carried by the *Reference News*. By analyzing the success and flaws in the translation from the perspective of cross-cultural communication, he suggests that the translator should play a salient role in countering hegemonic discourse in bridging two cultures. Xu Ying (2014) analyzes the employment of referential strategies to explore how the translators working for the *Reference News* translate western news articles properly by changing the naming and reference in the original text in order to mitigate ideological conflict.

To sum up, the majority of these researches are dedicated to E-C news translation, of which many pay attention to mediating the ideological differences between western countries and China. It is evident that these studies contribute a lot to the practice of E-C news translation. However, it is unfortunate that insufficient attention is paid to the export of Chinese news. In an attempt to provide enlightening suggestions for C-E news translation, this study is to fill the vacancy in the field.

### **An Analysis of the News Translation Under the Guidance of the Manipulation Theory**

The materials are collected from a column on the website of *China Daily*, *Mei Ri Yi Ci*. Each article covers a buzzword or word regarding current public concerns and hot topics. Each coverage contains four parts. First, each of them starts with several lines of short Chinese news report relating to that word, and then comes its

English translation; second, further explanation about the word is provided in Chinese; the third section is excerpt concerning the buzzword from President Xi Jinping's important speech and its English translation; the last one presents several relevant Chinese words and their translation. This column is of great significance for foreigners to really understand China. This study mainly deals with the first and the third part.

### **Ideology and News Translation**

**Ideology.** Lefevere (2004, p. 9) states that "translation function in a given culture at a given time and the way they understand themselves and their culture is one of the factors that may influence the way in which they translate". Translations are not made in a vacuum (Lefevere, 2004). According to Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevere (2001, p. 15), ideology is "the conceptual grid that includes viewpoints and attitudes that can be accepted by people at a certain time, under certain circumstances". It can be seen that there is rich and extensive connotation of ideology.

#### **Ideology's manipulation in news translation.**

Example 1:

The following example is an excerpt from an article named "Population Aging".

Source Text:

促进生育政策和相关经济社会政策配套衔接，加强人口发展战略研究。积极应对人口老龄化，构建养老、孝老、敬老政策体系和社会环境，推进医养结合，加快老龄事业和产业发展。

Target Text:

We will work to ensure that our childbirth policy meshes with related economic and social policies, and carry out research on the population development strategy. As we respond proactively to population aging, we will adopt policies and foster a social environment in which senior citizens are respected, cared for, and live happily in their later years. We will provide integrated elderly care and medical services, and accelerate the development of old-age programs and industries.

Analysis:

The term "计划生育政策" has been widely translated into "the birth control policy". Due to the ideological distinction of decades' standing and biased western coverage, not a few westerners hold a hostile view about the Communist Party and China. "Birth control" only gives them a very negative hint, imagining that the Chinese government brutally contains its citizen from giving birth to more than one child and even force pregnant women to have an abortion. The translation leads them to misunderstand and think that the policy is unhuman, which goes against the interest of the country.

Hence, the use and choose of the English name of important policies is vital for a country to get it across all over the world and build its image in foreign country with different ideology.

Example 2:

Source Text:

我们坚信，具有5000多年文明历史、创造了新中国70年伟大成就的中国人民和中华民族，在实现“两个一百年”奋斗目标、实现中华民族伟大复兴中国梦的新征程上，必将书写出更新更美的时代篇章。

Target Text:

The Chinese people and Chinese nation that made the great accomplishments over the 70 years will surely compose new and more beautiful chapters of the times in their journey to reach the two centenary goals and realize the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation.

Analysis:

For most foreigners, they do not have a good knowledge about Chinese history and culture. “Two centenary goals” will surely confuse them. Given the ideological difference, further explanation should be added. “Two centenary goals” means that to finish building a moderately prosperous society in all respects by the time the CPC celebrates its centenary in 2021; and to turn China into modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious by the time the People’s Republic of China celebrates its centenary in 2049. Explanation like this is necessary to news translation.

### Patronage and News Translation

**Patronage.** Lefevere (2010) demonstrates two control factors operating in the two levels through introducing the concept “system” with the example of literature and literary system. One factor is the “professional” which works inside the literary system, including the critics, reviewers, teachers, and translators. The other control factor which often functions outside the literary system called “patronage” acts as something like powers, including persons and institutions, which receives an intensive study compared with professional.

Briefly speaking, patronage is the powerful backbone of translation activity and as the most significant control element, it can either promote the translation activity or hamper the condition of translation.

**Patronage’s manipulation in news translation.** As the forces that can promote or prevent the translation activity, patronage may decide what to translate and how to translate. Particularly in the field of news translation, the translator has little freedom to choose. According to Lefevere, it is evident that the news agency and editor are the patronage in news translation, with the former being what is called “patronage” and the latter being the “professional”.

Take the column *Mei Ri Yi Ci* as an example, all of the coverages deal with theme of the same sort, such as “人口老龄化 (population aging)”, “扶贫资金 (funds for poverty alleviation)”, “农村人居环境 (rural living environment)”, and “社会法制建设 (develop socialist rule of law)”.

Quite different from literary translation, patronage is essential to news translation. The news outlet chooses the theme of their content, and after translation, the target text will be reviewed by the editor.

### Poetics and News Translation

**Poetics.** According to Lefevere (2004, p. 45), poetics can be discussed at two levels: “one is an inventory of literary devices, such as genres, motifs, prototypical characters and situation, and symbols; the other is a concept of what the role of literature is, or should be, in the social system as a whole”. Compared with the former one which refers to translation strategy adopted by translators to convey semantic information and style characteristics of source text to realize the purpose of translation and satisfy the aesthetic requirements of the target readers, the latter focuses on the function of poetics, that is its wielding enormous influence on the selection of translating theme which is in accordance with the ideology and requirement of source and target social system to ensure the target text’s acceptance.

**Poetics’ manipulation in news translation.** News translation has its own unique features. Reports on the same event can be widely divergent between a Chinese newspaper and an American news agency in terms of language and culture. That requires appropriate adjustment in the process of translation to cater for target audience’s reading habit, such as changing the order of clause or phrase, and adding or deleting some information when it is necessary, so as to achieve the goal of communication.

**Example 3:****Source Text:**

由中国法学会组织撰写的《中国法治建设年度报告（2018）》于11月14日正式发布。报告指出，全面依法治国得到有力推进，多个领域法治建设成果显著。

**Target Text:**

Law-based governance has been further promoted in China with notable progress made in various areas, according to a report made public Thursday. The 2018 annual report on China's rule of law was released by the China Law Society.

**Analysis:**

Comparing the source text and target text in Example 3, it is obvious that the translator changed the order of the original sentence. In English news article, the significance of the reported event is like to be positioned in the beginning, whereas the event itself tends to be presented first in Chinese. As a result, the fact that the annual report was released is placed in the end. If the translator does not make the change, the sentence can be unreadable for foreigners. Hence, the target text must be structurally adjusted in the process of translation.

**Example 4:****Source Text:**

共识说，媒体应当履行社会责任，坚持新闻报道真实性原则，为受众提供全面、准确、客观、公正的信息，及时澄清虚假信息，共同抵制假新闻，共同维护媒体的权威性和公信力。

**Target Text:**

"To ensure the authority and credibility of media are upheld, media should fulfill their social responsibility, ensure what is reported is factual and accurate and provide their audience with comprehensive, objective and impartial information. False information should be clarified without delay; and fake news should be boycotted by all", wrote the consensus.

**Analysis:**

In English, the reason or purpose of an action tends to emerge before the action. Whiling dealing with these kinds of sentence, the translator should always keep that in mind. Moreover, the source text demonstrates a typical feature of Chinese language especially in news text, which seems loose and not logical. In handling sentences of the sort, the translator needs to reorganize the original sentence to make to target text conform to the poetics of English language.

### **Conclusion**

First, based on analyses above, it can be concluded that the manipulation of ideology is inevitable. In news translation, on the one hand, the translator should cater for foreign reader's habit. On the other hand, the translator should firmly keep his political stance in the mind. Second, in order to make the communication succeed, the translator should have a good command of the poetics of the target language, so that it is easy for readers to get the right information the translator want to convey. Finally, in news translation in China, patronage plays a very important role, and patronage should exert right influence on translator to make the news translation work better.

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