

A Corpus-Based Study on Explicitation in English-Chinese Political Translation

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Based on corpus-related software and strategic framework of explicitation translation in applied texts, this paper uses *Report on the Work of the Government* as an example and explore the explicitation in political texts. According to the research results, political texts have shown explicitation in four sectors of the framework, especially the sector of first person plural pronouns, with quantity, language, culture, and others as influential factors.

Keywords: corpus translations studies, explicitation, *Report on the Work of the Government*

Introduction

Before 1950s, translation studies mainly focused on the language itself, with source text and translation as the core, and then the scientific structuralism turned to deconstructivism by the end of 20th century. The transformation of translation studies shows its complicity from the micro-view of text analysis to a more macro-angle emphasizing pragmatics, functions, and other factors. Such fundamental shift presents the ever-changing integration of translation studies and corpus translation studies are just one of them. Currently, it is widely recognized that the *Corpus Linguistics and Translation Studies: Implications and Applications* by Mona Baker was the start of corpus studies and after over 30 years, this range of research has evolved from the analysis of specific and independent text to the exploration of generality and overall studies. The end of last century was also the period when deconstructivism heated up, so corpus studies carried many characteristics that met the core of this theory. The traditional equivalence between the source text and translation was broken and the whole process is undergone within a series of social background and environment. Source-text is no longer the heart and leader of the translation (Wang & Huang, 2008) which has similarity with the studies of translator's subjectivity at that time. Based on the cutting-edge computer technologies, probability, and statistics as the tool and large amounts of original texts as the data source, corpus translation studies become the systematic descriptive research. It also shows interdisciplinary characteristics, integrating translation and studies in other fields.

Translation Universals and Explicitation

Among all the achievements of the corpus studies, translation universals gain the most concern. Translation Universals Theory refers to the general characteristics of a series of source text and translation, which are not influenced by certain language system (Baker, 1993, p. 243). It can also be interpreted as the common language

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factors in a more macro-translation environment. Based on such theory, more classification is put forward, including the S-universals and T-universals by Chesterman (2004). These two compare and analyze the intralingual and interlingual function of the source text and translation, with the behavior of translator as the main difference among the whole process, which shows similarity with the explicitation of translation. The word “explicitation” initially came from French scholars Vinay and Darbelnet (1995, p. 243), which means “The hidden information that is not explicitly explained in the source language, according to specific scene or context, can be showed in the target language with the form of notes or explanation”. However, although the explicitation hypothesis was released firstly in 1980s, after more than 30 years of development, doubts remained. Because the most obvious feature of explicitation is the longer translation compared with source text, the most direct doubt comes from the factor behind that phenomenon. Whether it is determined by the differences in the language system, or the translation process (Seguinot, 1988, pp. 106-108)? From discourse alteration to systematic comparison, explicitation naturally becomes a part of translation universals theory and meets the research target of corpus translation studies.

Ke (2005) believed the overt and covert phenomenon in translation is the result of multiple factors, including different language forms and directions, the ability and interpretation of translator, and the diversity in various society and culture, thus calling for more explanation by the translator. Currently, there are also new signs in the integration of translation studies, like the overt difference between novel and applied text. Chinese scholars have also noticed the explicitation in different text forms, such as the translation of *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* by Lin Yutang. Fang and Zhang (2020) analyzed the explicitation of this version by Lin from the angle of culture, conjunction, article, etc., and finally showed the explicitation will experience the process from “implication” to “explicitation”. Ma, Zhu, and Liu (2018) built Chinese-English business parallel corpus, and through data analysis, found the obvious explicitation in pronoun and preposition, leading to the conclusion that the fundamental difference of explicitation in business text lies in the language and text form itself.

Explicitation Strategies in Political Translation and Corpus Analysis

Wang (2021) thought the establishment of explicitation strategy system is based on certain text form and translation is processed from more formalized language to the less one. Such process holds the open feature, which means the model can adjust and deepen according to different text forms. Under his explicitation strategy system, the explicitation phenomenon can be divided into three kinds: the concept explicitation, connotation explicitation, and logic explicitation. Political texts are informative texts, just like business, economic, and sci-tech ones, so they can be put into this system for analysis.

Concept Explicitation and Connotation Explicitation

Concept explicitation refers to the interpretation of key words, terms, concepts, and specific expression in the translation, which helps to convey the meaning of the source text to the reader. Connotation explicitation is the connotation in the source text that can be clearly and correctly sent to the receiver. Although these two concepts vary in many cases, they share the same importance and similar effect in the political texts with Chinese characteristics.

Based on tree-tagger software, the overall 13,618 words in the *Report on the Work of the Government* are tagged. Then, using the lexical density computational formula by Ure (1971): $\text{lexical density} = \frac{\text{notional words}}{\text{all words}} \times 100\%$, we can get the lexical density and lexical richness in the English translation. Data are shown

as follows:

Table 1

POS Tagging Data and Lexical Density in Report on the Work of the Government

Noun	4256	Verb	2197
Adjective	1634	Pronoun	578
Adverb	312	Numeral	141
Total words	13618	Notional words	9118
Lexical density	66.96%		

From Table 1, some obvious solutions come in. Noun remains the heart of the political text for their special meaning and value. Compared with the whole article, the uses of adjective and adverb are less frequently, making it unique as similar as technical texts, which mainly focus on the expression and explanation of facts and principles. However, the facts shown in the political texts are not that professional, but it does not mean it will be easier for translator to handle. According to the formula of lexical density, it is easy to find that the more notional words there are in the original text, the greater information density that will affect the translation process, or hardship it will create. As the annual official document released by the Chinese government, the *Report on the Work of the Government* includes the actual work and situation in all sectors of China. Huge amounts of expressions, words, and sentences with Chinese characteristics are used in the report, conveying plenty of information and the structure is usually complex. For translator, how to transfer the lexical density and the complexity in the original Chinese text to the English version becomes the major task. Not just the specialized expressions in the original text, but also the meaning and content behind the words all need to be explained to the target readers, which are the performance of concept explication and connotation explication. Here are some examples showing these two explicitations:

Example 1: “六稳六保”

Translation: ensure stability on six key fronts (The six fronts refer to job employment, the financial field, foreign trade and investment, domestic investment, and future expectations.)

The concept of “stability in six key areas” was firstly released at July 2018, but this word is currently more referred together with “security in six key fronts”, which was mentioned first at April 2020. “Stability in six key areas” came from the complicated domestic and international environment change China faced in 2018, and then the outbreak of corona virus at the end of 2019 accelerated its usage in government dialogue. External economic crisis impacted the financial market, investors were seriously stricken, and government suffered from huge budget pressure, which all became the major challenge to Chinese economic development. Hence, ensuring stability in six key areas like employment and finance becomes the core and connotation in “stability in six key areas”.

As for translation, because these two expressions all include similar six areas, “Ensure stability on six key fronts” is used to combine the meaning. Then, the explanation is given, showing both the concept of concept explication and connotation explication.

Example 2: 立足国情实际，既要立刻，及时果断，还要坚持不采用“大水漫灌”的方式。

Translation: Based on China’s current situation, we do not choose a deluge of strong stimulus policies but took precise, immediate and timely steps.

Example 3: 2020年初剩余的551万农村贫困人口已经实现了完全脱贫、52个贫困县全部摘帽。

Translation: All poor rural areas currently, totaling 5.51 million in early 2020, were lifted from poverty, as

were all of China's remaining 52 poor counties.

“大水漫灌” and “摘帽” are common words in the politics and written words in the latest years. “大水漫灌” literally means flood covers an area, but this word in economics refers to the proactive monetary policies released by the People's Bank of China. This kind of policy will largely increase the capital in the market, leading to higher currency flow and strong stimulus for consumption. Investors can also ask more debt from commercial banks and boost the national economy. Generally, proactive monetary policies are common means by governments and nations in order to regulate market economy, but “大水漫灌” is actually the measure that only focuses on stimulating economic growth on a short term, while possible inflation and capital bubble in the future cannot be controlled and foreseen. “摘帽” is the oral expression in China, literally referring to taking off the hat. It also has the meaning of removing special treatment (ST) marks in stocks in the financial market. But, in China's battle against poverty period, this word more commonly means the successful poverty alleviation of the certain county.

When translating these words that have sharp contrast between literal and hidden connotation, translator has to the balance between “shape” and “meaning”, which is the connotation explicitation. “大水漫灌” is translated as “a deluge of strong stimulus policies”, which combines the “shape” of “flood” and the “meaning” of “stimulus policies”. However, “be lifted from poverty” abandons the “shape” and only chooses to convey the original “meaning”. These two kinds of translation are methods often used in political texts and these essences are similar. The literal meaning of the original text is expressed in an expansive way, which is the performance of connotation explicitation.

Logic Explicitation and Subject Explicitation

Logic explicitation comes from the comparative characteristics of English and Chinese, the difference of which is about the connection between rhetoric words and information (Wang, 2021). The logic of Chinese is not shown on literal side and the use of connection words is not often. It is more related to the meaning interaction, which is more decided by the internal logic, like the interaction among articles, words, sentences, and paragraphs. However, English is quite different. In English sentences, connection words are often used and logic mentality is clearly shown. This may be one of the reasons why English cultures focus on logic analysis. But as the informative and applicable texts, the political articles have strong internal logic and high information density, which is naturally shown during the translation process. Translation in essence cannot leave without the interaction, fusion, and selection of two languages and cultures. This process is constrained under the essential factors, such as translator, original text and translation text, and other elements like society, mentality, religion, etc. Hence, how to convey the hidden logic behind the text is the responsibility of translators.

Example 4: 发展并不断推动城市群和都市圈建设, 实施城市更新方案与行动, 完善住房市场体系与保障体系, 提升城镇化发展的质量。

Translation: We will develop city clusters and metropolitan areas, take an action plan for urban renewal, and promote the housing market and housing support system. These moves will enable us to realize higher quality urbanization.

This sentence is what you often find in political texts, and there are no related conjunction words or conclusive expressions in the Chinese original text. However, if you carefully observe again, you will easily find the first three short sentences are all related to urbanization and city development. The aim of these measures is to finally realize “the improvement of urban development”. Hence, in the translation, the conclusion like “these moves will enable us to” is used to express the hidden logic relations in the Chinese, which is also the symbol of

logic explication.

Subject explication is the most obvious characteristics of political texts with Chinese characteristics. By taking advantage of corpus analysis software Wordsmith, this paper analyzes the subject “我们” in the *Report on the Work of the Government* and its targeted translation in English “our, we, us, and ours”. Here are the data:

Table 2

Subject in the Report on the Work of the Government and Its Translation

汉语原文	英语译文	
我们 16	We	385
	Our	83
	Ours	0
	us	9

From Table 2, it is easy to find that only 26 times of “我们” are used in the original text, while the targeted translation in English can be over 450, so the subject explication in the political texts is quite common. The root cause is the difference in both languages, like logic explication. Many sentences in Chinese, such as the Example 4, have only one subject and multiple small sections, with little or without conjunction words. But English is another scenario, which heavily relies on the subject and conjunction. These sentences cannot always sustain, or the overall structure will be broken, leading to many new ones and new subjects. Besides, the text style can also have influence. Political texts, especially the official documents like the *Report on the Work of the Government*, have their subjects the representative of government or official speaker. The whole article is expressed from the angle of individual or government departments, which does not change, so similar or the same subjects will be used frequently. The use of subject also carries the ideas and standpoint of the speaker, so the hidden meaning must be shown in the translation. By using the concord in the Wordsmith and taking “我们” as the search word, the following results are presented:

N	Concordance	Set Tag	Word #	Sent. #	Sent. Pos.	Para. #	Para. Pos.
1	！重任在肩，更须砥砺奋进。让我们更加紧密地团结在以习近平		9,593	497	4%	0	99%
2	，同心共创民族复兴美好未来。我们要坚持独立自主的和平外交		9,501	491	8%	0	98%
3	保持香港、澳门长期繁荣稳定。我们要坚持对台工作大政方针，		9,433	488	7%	0	98%
4	的时代华章。各位代表！我们要继续全面准确贯彻“		9,356	486	4%	0	97%
5	期待的发展业绩。各位代表！我们要坚持和完善民族区域自治		9,107	477	6%	0	94%
6	，推进生态系统保护和修复，让我们生活的家园拥有更多碧水		7,539	384	85%	0	78%
7	好吃饭问题始终是头等大事，我们一定要下力气也完全有		6,843	337	42%	0	71%
8	长期向好的基本面没有改变。我们要坚定信心，攻坚克难，		3,843	184	9%	0	40%
9	社会稳定和安全。展望未来，我们有信心有能力战胜前进道路		3,578	180	16%	0	37%
10	。一些领域腐败问题仍有发生。我们一定要直面问题和挑战，		1,817	106	12%	0	19%
11	诚挚感谢！在肯定成绩的同时，我们也清醒看到面临的困难和		1,682	97	50%	0	17%
12	显了人民是真正的英雄，这是我们战胜一切困难挑战的力量		1,561	91	88%	0	16%
13	点对点”服务。经过艰苦努力，我们率先实现复工复产，经济		505	15	15%	0	5%
14	基本盘。面对历史罕见的冲击，我们在“六稳”工作基础上，		281	8	20%	0	3%
15	秩序创造必要条件。一年来，我们贯彻党中央决策部署，统筹		236	6	23%	0	2%
16	持续努力，不断巩固防控成果。我们针对疫情形势变化，及时		186	5	4%	0	2%

Figure 1. The frequencies of “我们” in the *Report on the Work of the Government*.

From the analysis in Figure 1, the content after the subject in our political text is often the attitude, standpoint, and policies of the major country, so the expression must be clear, symbolic, and unswerving. Subject

explicitation is not just the increment in numbers, but also the culture and language factors hidden in the words. Through the corpus-based studies, such meaning can be dug from the data, and also shows the subject explicitation in the political texts.

Conclusion

Through all data in the *Report on the Work of the Government* and the framework of the explicitation translation strategies, it can be found that political texts have expressed the characteristics of all four explicitation dimensions with enormous examples. These examples can also be research materials for further research, such as more detailed classification under the four dimensions, the variety of changes in some specific examples, and how to actually take advantage of this phenomenon to make real practice. However, this paper only lists single data source, which means more political articles in different sectors should be involved. With limited information, the analysis can be impacted and cannot cover all the explicitation in this field. Through the comparative analysis between different texts and corpus, maybe more complete conclusion can be shown. Besides, the four explicitation dimensions can be classified more carefully targeted at different texts. In various locations, they will have different expressions. Based on the conclusion of this paper, following research will be more comprehensive.

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