

On the Translation of Academic Political Text from
the Perspective of Chesterman's Translation Norm:
Case Study of Translating *The Realization of
the Historical Mission of Literature and Art in Socialism with
Chinese Characteristics for a New Era*

LU Chunying

Jishou University, China

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Abstract: With the rise of China, the world is eager to know more about China, and China also needs to go global. International communication is imperative, and translation is of indispensable importance. *The Realization of the Historical Mission of Literature and Art in Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era* (hereafter referred to as *Historical Mission*) belongs to academic political texts. This article is based on the excerpt from Chapter two "Adhere to people-centered orientation in creating art works" in this book. Academic political texts are inclined to embody formal words and intonation, well-knit logic, complex sentence structure, changeable sentence patterns, and many long sentences, which bring great challenges to the author. Chesterman's Translation Norms can serve as a guide to solve specific translation problems, convey the intention of the author and improve the readability and accuracy of the translated text. With specific examples in view, this author chooses translation strategies from the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic levels under the guidance of Chesterman's Translation Norms and discusses the significance of the Norms in academic political



translation, hoping to provide some references for future researchers.

Keywords: *The Realization of the Historical Mission of Literature and Art in Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era*; academic political text; translation norms; Chesterman

Notes on the contributor: LU Chunying is an MTI student at the College of Foreign Languages, Jishou University, China. Her academic interests lie in translation theories and practice and corpus-based translation studies. Her email address is 365930205@qq.com.

1 Introduction

Academic translation, as the name suggests, refers to the translation of academic works, that is, the thinking and conceptual analysis of problem awareness, rather than the translation of recreational books (Chen 2011: 149). The purpose of academic translation is to exchange and learn from knowledge. With China's economic and social development, cross-border exchanges are becoming more and more frequent. Interdisciplinary scholars also pay more and more attention to the Western theory, hoping to draw on different strengths. Under this trend, the influence of academic translation on society is increasingly obvious. But in China, academic translation research doesn't have not much, needless to say, academic political translation. As of May 2023, a search with "academic translation" as the keyword on CNKI yielded just 311 results, most of which were master's translation practice reports. In this connection, the author takes the second chapter in *Historical Mission* as an example, under the guidance of Chesterman's Translation Norms, to explore the appropriate translation strategies during the C-E academic political translation, providing something new in the research in this respect.

2 Overview of the Chesterman's Translation Norms

Chesterman believes that translation norms can be divided into expectant norms and professional norms. The former one refers to readers' expectations for translation, including text type, wording, style etc. affected by the widely accepted translation tradition in the target language culture, the form of parallel text in the target language culture, and economy, culture, ideology and among others. Professional norm can be further divided into responsibility norm, communication norm and relationship norm, which come from translation methods used by the authoritative translators recognized by the society (Chen 2014: 36). Professional norm guides and regulates the translation processes by restricting the choice of translation skills and strategies. The responsibility norm, as a code of ethics, requires the translator to be loyal to all parties related to the translation activity, including the original author, the client, himself and the expected reader, to perform the duties of the translator (Nord 1991: 29–39). The translator is responsible for his own translation. Communication norm, as a kind of social norm, considers the translation as a kind of social communication behavior, and it requires the translator to be a social

and information transmitter at the same time in order to maximize the communication effect by adding or reducing information, or using explanation, among other methods to improve the communication effect. The relationship norm is a language norm, which requires that the translation behavior of the translator must ensure that there is a suitable degree of similarity between the source language and the target language, and this degree of suitability requires the translator to obey the type of the text, the will of clients, the intention of the original author and the needs of the expected readers (Chesterman 1997: 69). Based on the above, translation strategies can be divided into three categories: syntactic strategy, semantic strategy, and pragmatic strategy (Chesterman 1997: 92–112).

2.1 *Syntactic translation - part of speech transformation*

The linguistic styles of English and Chinese have many differences. English tends to use nouns, adjectives and prepositions, while in Chinese, there is no preference like this. To preserve the content of the message, the form must be changed (Nida et. 2004: 5). As a result, the author of this report makes some changes in the forms when translating. In practical translation, flexible methods such as changing a verb into a noun and changing a noun to a preposition can often save the translator from “danger” (Ye 2007: 52). Proper part-of-speech transformation can greatly improve the fluency of translation, make it meet the expectations of the target language readers for the readability of translation, and meet the requirements of expectation norm and communication norm.

Example 3: 在當前日益複雜的歷史文化語境下, 習近平總書記關於文藝的系列講話不僅明確了社會主義文藝的人民性本質, 闡述了文藝與人民的內在關係。

Translation: Against the increasingly complicated context of history culture, General Secretary Xi Jinping delivers a series of addresses about literature and art, which have put clarity on the fact that people are the essence of literature and art featured with socialism, and have made explanation about the inside relationship between literature and art on the one hand and people on the other.

Analysis: English is a kind of static language made up of more nouns or noun phrases. And Chinese tends to be more dynamic, consisting of more verbs or verb phrases. There are double predicates in the source language. The author extracts the main body of this sentence, that is, “在當前日益複雜的歷史文化語境下, 習近平總書記關於文藝的系列講話” and other parts belong to the significance of the addresses. In this connection, the author uses participle phrases that belong to the noun group and “have done” to connect the other sentence groups in order to make the structure clearer and the meaning more accurate.

Example 4: 一切進入文學中的世俗生活, 只有作為精神表達的物質載體出現, 它才具備了文學的正當性與合法性。

Translation: Everything related to mundane life in literature, only when it appears as the material carrier of

spiritual expression, can it be legitimate and legal.

Analysis: Two points in this sentence should be taken into consideration in translation. One is not to mix the meaning of “正當性” and “合法性”. They are two nouns with different meanings. The former focuses more on rationality, while the latter focuses more on legitimacy, related to law. The underlined part belongs to the noun part, but the translator of the report uses two different adjectives, that is “legitimate” and “legal,” to express the same meaning, which may be more faithful and readable.

2.2 *Semantic translation - sentence structure adjustment*

People in the East and West think in a different way, especially in terms of language structure and order. English sentences consist of complicated tree structures while run-on sentences are preferred in Chinese (Gao 2021).

Besides, the position of emphasis also varies in the two languages. English sentences tend to put something important forward, such as a conclusion, and then give some following explanation. On the contrary, the Chinese language prefers to first give details and causes before the conclusions and results. So, in order to make the translation target-readers-friendly, the author should free from the form of the original text and rearrange the order and structure of the sentences.

Example 11: 在中國共產黨的文藝政策中,文藝歷來是為人民的,當代文藝要反映人民心聲,就要堅持為人民服務、為社會主義服務這個根本方向。

Translation: Among policies about literature and art proposed by the Communist Party of China, literature and art all the time are for the people, which sheds light on the fundamental direction for literature and art where it should reflect upon what people really care about in their hearts and serve for people as well as socialism.

Analysis: The author makes the two sentences into one by means of logic reconstruction. The former two sentence groups give an explanation of the literature and art from the perspective of CPC’s related policies and the rest ones belong to further explanations of the first sentence, clarifying what is the literature and art’s purpose and how to reach it in the modern era. So, the “根本方向” is the key point of the second sentence. English sentences tend to put something important such as the conclusion or opinions, first and then explain the cause of the incidents. As a result, the translator of the report connects the two Chinese sentences into one English sentence by dividing the second sentence into two attributive clauses.

Example 12: 習近平總書記在文藝工作座談會上、在哲學社會科學工作座談會上、在中國文聯十大和中國作協九大開幕式上以及在黨的十九大報告中都做出了重要講話。作為黨的文藝精神的綱領性

文獻,被視為新形勢下中國當代文藝發展道路的指南,是馬克思主義文藝理論的當代發展和理論創新,是對中國特色社會主義文藝理論的豐富和提升。

Translation: On various occasions such as Literary and Art Work Symposium, Philosophy and Social Science Work Symposium, opening ceremonies of Top Ten China Federation of Literature and Art Circles and Ninth National Congress of Chinese Writers Association and The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Xi Jinping delivers important speeches, which are considered as programmatic documents for the CPC's literature and art's spirit, and as guidelines for the development of Chinese modern literature and art under the new situation, developing and innovating modern theories of Marxism literature and art, and enriching and promoting the literature and art theories featured by socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Analysis: It is a long discourse with a complicated structure that needs reconstruction. The main structure of the long paragraph can be generalized as “講話被視為新形勢下中國當代文藝發展道路的指南,是馬克思主義文藝理論的當代發展和理論創新,是對中國特色社會主義文藝理論的豐富和提升。” If translated literally, the translation may be lengthy, and the main point of this sentence cannot stand out. The translator of the report classifies different addresses on various occasions and makes them into preposition phrases. The principal clause can be “習近平總書記發表演講,” short but precise, and “黨的文藝精神的綱領性文獻,被視為新形勢下中國當代文藝發展道路的指南” is a definition of President Xi's addresses mentioned above, so the author of this report translates it into a long in length but clear in logic additive clause. As for “是馬克思主義文藝理論的當代發展和理論創新,是對中國特色社會主義文藝理論的豐富和提升,” the author of this report considers it into “results” of these “documents” and “guidelines,” using participle phrases to deal with this part.

2.3 *Pragmatic translation - make the translator visible*

Make the Translator Visible refers to the change of the author's existence, or the obvious invasion or prospect of translation. The common forms of this translation strategy include adding footnotes, brackets, adding notes, etc. By doing so, it can not only attract readers' attention to the existence of the translator, but also make necessary explanations for readers, so that readers can better understand the text.

Example 1: 第三是為武裝起來了的工人農民即八路軍、新四軍和其他人民武裝隊伍,這是革命戰爭的主力。

Translation: Next is for the main forces in the revolutionary battle, that is the armed workers and peasants, namelythe Eight Route Army, the New Fourth Army on the one hand and other armed forces on the other.

Analysis: There are many expressions featured with Chinese characteristics in this short sentence. Not all



targeted readers have a full understanding of Chinese history. In this connection, taking the reader-friendly translation principle into consideration, “八路軍”, “新四軍” and “其它人民武裝隊伍” should be firstly translated in a literal way and then add respective annotations in order to make information understood by the targeted readers. Or rather, the Eight Route Army means an army led by the Communist Party of China during the nationwide War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1937–1945). The New Fourth Army was an army led by the Chinese Communist Party during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. As for other armed forces, armed forces consist of soldiers and the petty city bourgeoisie.

Example 2: 就像魯迅紮根時代,洞悉辛亥革命前後底層民眾的處境和心情,以其悲憫的情懷和超越性的精神塑造出祥林嫂、閩土、阿Q、孔乙己等“哀其不幸、怒其不爭”的典型人物形象,深刻揭示了時代的精神眾生相。

Translation: For example, Lu Xun takes root in the times to understand the situation and mood of the people living at the bottom of society before and after the Revolution of 1911. That's how, with his compassion and transcendence spirit, he can produce the typical characters like “Sister Xianglin, Run Tu, Ah Q, and Kong Yiji”, which deeply reveals the spirit of people at that time.

Analysis: Even if some characters mentioned here are very celebrated among Chinese readers, we can't deny that they have their own limitations in dissemination, which, to some extent, means that extra annotations are needed to make translation borderless, especially when the translation could be read from the young to the old, from women to men and from India to America. So, the translator of the report adds some background information by means of annotation. For example, “魯迅” is a well-known writer in China but for some foreigners they may know nothing about him, just like British Charles Dickens to some Chinese people, so the translator of the report introduces him as a famous and prolific Chinese writer who created a lot of popular characters like “Sister Xianglin, Run Tu, Ah Q, and Kong Yiji” mentioned in this sentence.

3 Conclusion

Historical Mission is a kind of academic political text featured with formality, obscurity and abstractness, belonging to a highly professional and informative text. In this connection, faithfulness and readability should come first. This article, Chesterman's Translation Norms can serve as a translation standard in political academic text translation, namely norms of the expectation, responsibility, communication and relationship, and also can provide some related specific translation strategies, all of which can solve part of the problems in the process of this translation from syntactic, semantic and pragmatic three levels.

Speaking of translation strategies, the author, through translation practice, finds that they are connected with one another, although different translation difficulties require different strategies, and translators often need to use

multiple strategies comprehensively.

Due to the limitation of the author's translation capability and the length of this article, many shortcomings still need improving. Firstly, the translation quality should be improved, especially some professional terms translation. Secondly, the selected examples in this article are not diversified enough, and the analysis of the chosen cases may be further. Finally, the citation of Nord's description of responsibility norms can only be found in some other papers, which also don't tell its specific source. Generally speaking, the author hopes that subsequent related studies can be more and can make up for the gap of this article.

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