A Research on Translation Techniques for Hedges in Outward Propaganda Text: Based on a Bilingual Parallel Corpus

Yon Jee Kwun (Yang Yikun)[1, a], Yon Jee Han (Yang Yihan)[2, b]

[1]Foreign Language School, Gannan Normal University, Ganzhou, China
[2]School of Event and Communication, SUIBE, Shanghai, China
[a]1026915492@qq.com, [b]19914719632@163.com

Abstract: *The hedges theory proposed by G. Lakoff is widely used in various discourses for outward propaganda texts. To effectively explore the English translation techniques of various types of the hedges in outward propaganda texts, a bilingual Chinese-English parallel corpus is introduced into the research, and on this basis, contrasting with the correspondent English translation, the types of the hedges are divided comprehensively into 2 and further into 6 in detail. The research reveals that, various types and uneven distribution of the hedges are there in outward propaganda texts conventionally, and to translate the hedges, methods and techniques such as reorganization, retroversion, conversion, addition and deletion are commonly used, but still some distinctions are there in the using rate of these techniques for each individual type of the hedges, and all of the certain distinctions are discussed in this paper. Therefore, the research is not only relatively significant for English translation teaching, but also practically significant for English translating techniques research in various scenes.*

Keywords: *Bilingual Parallel Corpus; Hedges; Translation Techniques; Outward Propaganda Text*

1. Introduction

The most prominent feature of the hedges is the undefined connotation and expression, which is often seen in human language in various scenes. On the basis of the Fuzzy Set Theory put forward by L. A. Zadeh, G. Lakoff puts forward the concept of hedges by applying the original fuzzy qualifiers to truth calculus. G. Lakoff pointed out that the hedges are words that change and adjust the degree of ambiguity of subjects, and through comparative analysis of various outward propaganda texts, it is found that in addition to the wide application of hedges, they are endowed with special semantics and functions in combination with application scenarios, and differences in semantic expression are caused by cultural differences between China and the west, which undoubtedly make the translation works more difficult. Based on this, this paper will conduct an in-depth study on the English translating techniques for the fuzzy language in outward propaganda texts, which will not only help to improve the accuracy of the translation for outward propaganda, but is also relatively significant for the expansion of English translation teaching.

2. Literature review

(1) Classification of hedges. So far, domestic and foreign researchers have not reached a unified opinion on the classification of hedges. The existing classification methods mainly include three classification criteria: grammar, pragmatic and semantic. Specifically, with grammar as the classification standard, researchers study the parts of speech, suffixes, functions and attitudes of hedges, and put forward 4 classifying methods: reorganization, retroversion, conversion, addition and deletion. Moreover, from the semantic point of view, hedges can be classified into 5 categories: degree, range, quantity, quality and mode.[1] S. Laviosa et al. classified hedges into two types: variable type and palliative type based on pragmatics. Furthermore, according to S. Laviosa's study, the variable hedges can be divided into hedges with varying degree and varying scope according to different usage scenarios. Nevertheless, according to S. Laviosa's study, the moderating hedges can be divided into direct moderating hedges and indirect moderating hedges according to different pragmatic scenarios.[2] Hu Kaibao and other researchers further divided hedges from a pragmatic perspective by establishing an independent corpus of the hedges. They hold that Chinese variable hedges were contented with degree-variable type, range-

variable type and quantity-variable type, while the moderating hedges were contented with subjectivity-pointed type, objectivity-based type and tentativity-concluded type.[3] Through the analysis of the classification standards of hedges mentioned above, it is found that the hedges can be divided into different categories according to different classification standards. However, looking at these various classification standards, the idea widely recognized by the academic community is that, from the perspective of pragmatics, the classification of the hedges is divided into variable type and palliative type.

(2) Translation strategies of the hedges. J. Marcus[4] et al paid early attention to the problems existing in the process of hedges translation, conducted in-depth analyses and discussions on some strategies and techniques adopted in the previous translation works, and found that addition and deletion were widely used in the past translation works. After that, more researchers had made comprehensive contrasts of the original and translated outward propaganda texts in combination with the differences of Eastern and Western culture and communication. By analyzing the existing academic writing corpus and contrasting the distinctions between the hedges in the target texts and the original texts, in academic content, Jonsson, R. finally came up with the translation techniques and strategies of the hedges.[5] A. Dunn made a systematic analysis of the German hedges translation with cognitive modality markers as research object, and found that there were great distinctions between English and German translation in the modality markers use of the hedges, which should be paid attention to in the translation process.[6] D. Cadiz analyzed the translation techniques and strategies adopted by translators in the face of political discourse, and found that deletion and retroversion were widely used by translators in the translating process.[7]

In order to make a systematic study of the translation principles, methods and techniques of hedges between Chinese and English, some Chinese researchers had also made in-depth analyses of the English translation of the hedges and the original text. Wang Xiaoli made an in-depth discussion on the translation methods and techniques of the hedges, and pointed out that the hedges as a kind of fuzzy language, which was featured with semantic ambiguity, and which brought greater difficulty to translation. In this case, according to Wang Xiaoli's research, the translation principle of equivalence must be adhered to. At the same time, corresponding translation techniques should be adopted based on different styles according to Wang Xiaoli's research.[8]

In later studies, more researchers conducted in-depth analyses and researches on the matters that should be paid attention to in the translating process of the hedges based on the translation techniques for academical languages and pragmatical languages. Among whom, Wang Mingyu and Cui Xuebo put forward the divisor translation for hedges, and by contrasting English and Chinese expressions, they found the distinctions of the divisor between English and Chinese.[9] Thus, it can be seen that equivalent translation is widely recognized and applied in the translation process of hedges. Considering the specific context, in the process of translation, it is often necessary to use the conversion and deletion to effectively translate the hedges.

Moreover, some researchers have explored the translation styles used in the translation of hedges, but such studies are relatively rare, and most of them are for the field of literature research, and there are few representatives for them.

After reviewing all the above studies, most of them are kind of theoretical speculation, and all of them take corpora and sentences as examples to carry out in-depth discussions on the techniques, methods and strategies used in the translation, or discuss the translation strategies of the hedges under the guidance of certain theories.

Although the corpus is fully studied from various perspectives in existing researches, the generic variation is usually ignored, which will have a certain impact on the reliability of the conclusions. Moreover, in order to further clarify the value to research on the hedges translation, relevant researchers have made use of corpus to analyze the hedges in conference interpreting, the main points of which are as follows: the application, features, motivation, norms of the hedges in conference interpreting. Finally, it is concluded that the research of the hedges is not only relatively valuable for English translation teaching, but also practically significant for English translation strategies in various scenarios.

To sum up, although English-Chinese translation studies on the hedges have realized the transformation from a small number of corpora and a few translation examples in the early days to the use of the big-data corpus, and have achieved certain results, there are still deficiencies as followed: First of all, as far as the translation of FLAGs (the programming instruction) in corpus is concerned, most FLAGs are conference-centered, while those for political articles are FLAG-centered. Because of the stylistic distinctions between interpretation and translation, it is necessary to make a deep study of the translation of the hedges. Second, in terms of the subjects, previous studies mostly focused on the Chinese translation of the hedges, but there are both Chinese and English hedges, which can be translated by

different means, so both the techniques of the English-Chinese and Chinese-English translation of the hedges need to be further explored.

In view of this, on the basis of the establishment of Chinese and English corpus, this paper plans to adopt a combination of quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis to conduct quantitative statistics and speculative analysis on the features of the hedges used in outward propaganda texts and translation techniques adopted in English translation around 3 key issues: What are the usage features of Chinese hedges in outward propaganda texts? What are the common techniques and strategies for translating Chinese hedges in outward propaganda texts into English in outward propaganda texts? What are the similarities and distinctions between the translation of outward propaganda texts used in the two languages?

3. Classification of Corpus Collection, Research Methods and Translation Techniques

(1) Collection of literature materials. For the research needs, this paper intends to build a bilingual parallel corpus by systematically collecting outward propaganda texts between 2001 and 2023 and its official English translations from national media represented by Xinhua News Agency. The corpus contains 823,446 words, including 552,376 words in Chinese and 271,070 words in English involving a variety of aspects.

(2) Research methods. In terms of classification methods, this paper drew on the research results of S. Laviosa and other researchers, and had made revisions according to the actual retrieval and application of corpus. Meanwhile, according to the above description, the existing research divided the hedges in the collected political texts into 2 categories: the variable type and the palliative type. The so-called variable type includes degree-variable type, range-variable type and quantity-variable type. The palliative type could be divided into subjectivity-pointed type, objectivity-based type and tentativity-concluded type. The results of classification are consistent over 90% with the results of existing studies. Moreover, AntConc, a computer software for building parallel corpus, is used to make statistics and analysis of the frequency of FLAGs in the collected articles for outward propaganda, and through manual inspection, determining which FLAGs are useful for the research, and then the frequency and proportion of the collection's use are analyzed.

After the works above had done, by comparing the English equivalents of the hedges, the data with high effective frequency and diversified translation means is made as the research object. By screening, it was found that in the collected texts, the hedges such as "进一步", "重点", "一些", "我们要", "根据" and "一定" had a high frequency of occurrence, and there were great distinctions in their translation in different occasions. Finally, the 6 collected hedges were rigorously analyzed in the search line, and the translation strategies adopted in each occasion were then summarized, so as to complete the collation and statistics of different types of the hedges translation techniques and strategies.

(3) Classification of translation techniques. In terms of the classification of translation techniques, this paper mainly refers to the Chinese-English translation techniques introduced by Eppler-Hattab[10] and analyzes and summarizes previous studies and the hedges translation examples. The conclusion is that in political texts, the hedges translation generally includes equivalent translation, addition, deletion recombination and conversion. The results and the existing classification methods are consistent over 90%. Equivalent translation refers to a translation technique that finds the corresponding words in the target language, and then directly uses the corresponding words to translate the original language. To expand or dense the translation, we can consider addition, deletion and combination. Addition means that in the process of translation, the expression is enhanced by adding words, phrases or sentences to the translation without deviating from the original meaning. Deletion refers to the translation technique of ignoring some words in the original text in order to achieve the purpose of special expression. Combination refers to the translation of two or more words in the original text into one word, the translation of two or more simple sentences into one sentence, or the translation of a compound sentence into a single sentence.[11] Due to the cultural distinctions between the East and the West, Chinese and English are also quite different in terms of grammatical features and expressions. Therefore, it is completely impossible to make the content of English translation fully accepted by foreign readers by only superficial equivalent translation of vocabulary. Therefore, in the process of translating the hedges, some specific operations, such as addition and deletion, should be properly adopted considering the specific context and actual situation. As for word conversion, its fundamental purpose is to make expressions closer to English habits. In the process of word conversion, the original Chinese words are usually converted into English words or structures that do not exactly correspond to each other, so as to

make the translation result more readable. Through the analysis of previous examples of hedges translation in outward propaganda texts, it was found that most of the methods used were part-of-speech transformation and semantic transformation.

4. Hedges in Outward Propaganda Texts

(1) Feature analysis of hedges. Using AntConc to make statistics on the frequency and distribution of the hedges used in outward propaganda texts, it was found that there were many kinds of hedges used in outward propaganda texts in China from 2001 to 2023, the statistical results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 : Statistical Table of frequency and Types of the Hedges

Types of the Hedges		Frequency of Corpus Types	Frequency of Corpus Tokens	Ratio
Variable Hedges	Degree-variable Type	28	1688	0.95%
	Range-variable Type	25	2774	0.95%
	Quantity-variable Type	23	541	4.58%
Palliative Hedges	Subjectivity-pointed Type	6	135	3.81%
	Objectivity-based Type	5	103	3.98%
	Tentativity-concluded Type	6	141	3.62%

The number of token and type of the variable hedges was more than that of the palliative hedges', and the distribution is uneven on the whole. Besides, based on token and type, the general level of variant of hedges was low, the highest value was the quantity-variable type's, and it was only 4.58%, which fully indicated that there were great distinctions in the expression form and frequency of hedges in outward propaganda texts, and which means the hedges used in outward propaganda texts tended to concentrate on only a few words. Moreover, the frequency and proportion of the hedges used in the Chinese corpus were also analyzed. The results showed that the proportion of variable hedges was over 90%, which overwhelmed the palliative one's. Among them, the proportion of range-variable hedges was over 50%, which was obviously higher than the other 2 kinds of variable ones'. Contracted with the result, the proportion of palliative hedges was not much different, inside which the portion of tentativity-concluded type was over 35%, which is slightly higher than that of subjectivity-pointed type and objectivity-based type's. It is an intrinsic linguistic feature of outward propaganda and also the most-difficult in translation.

In order to better screen out the high-frequency hedges used in the corpus, we used the parallel corpus to find the specific use frequency of each type of hedges and took them as the objects of this research. And it came out with a result that "我们要" was frequently used for more than 90 times, and was the most common phrase in the hedges of subjectivity-pointed type. Based on the result, this paper further started from the practical needs, by means of contrasting, it came out that "更......", 83 times of usage, "......等", 326 times of usage, "一批", 615 times of usage, "按......", 83 times of usage, "必将", 59 times of usage, "......等", 72 times of usage, However, because their English - Chinese translation is word-to-word correspondence, so they were not so valuable for research. Moreover, the paper had also contracted some commonly used and representative words with their English equivalents to further study the special techniques used and their distribution in translation.

(2) Main translation techniques and methods. In this paper, 6 typical and representative English translation examples of different kinds from the corpus and some strategies and methods that translators should adopt when translating outward propaganda texts were collected and discussed. First, through statistical analysis of 682 pairs of search lines by AntConc, it was found that 384 pairs of search lines had adopted the equivalent translation, accounting for more than 50%, which indicated that translators took the equivalent translation as the main translation method when translating hedges in outward propaganda texts. Secondly, 125 pairs of search lines used lexical conversion translation, accounting for 19.6%. As far as outward propaganda texts are concerned, although they have a certain seriousness in themselves, they do not require word-to-word correspondence, but should be combined with the context

and situation to carry out reasonable lexical transformation, so that the target language can be accepted by the public, and only in this way can the purpose of outward propaganda translation be achieved. Furthermore, by statistical analysis, it was also found that in the translation of hedges, the deletion method was used nearly 100 times, accounting for 14.12%, which indicated that deletion is also commonly used for translators. The frequency of semantic conversion is 58 times, accounting for 8.43%, and the frequency of addition was 29 times, accounting for only 3.86%, which was the least frequent in the use of various translation methods. It can be seen from the above that translators mainly used equivalent translation, lexical conversion and deletion, supplemented by semantic conversion and addition when translating the hedges in outward propaganda texts. In order to discuss the translation techniques of each type of hedges, this paper made a statistical analysis of the translation techniques and strategies of the variable hedges and the palliative hedges. The statistical results showed that for the 2 types of hedges, there were both similarities and distinctions in the strategies adopted by translators in the process of translation. Among them, the most used method was the equivalent translation, which had a usage rate of more than 50% in the translation of the 2 types of hedges, and the 2 usages in the translation of the 2 types were quite closed. This fully showed that no matter from the general point of view, or from the specific individual analysis, the equivalent translation was most commonly used. Secondly, there was no obvious difference in the frequency of addition and deletion in the translation of variable hedges and palliative hedges, but there was a significant difference in lexical conversion. By contrasting, the results showed that the lexical conversion accounts for 23.1% in the variable hedges translation, but only 4.9% in the palliative hedges'. The semantic conversion, on the contrary, accounts for only 3% in the variable hedges translation, while it accounted for 25.6% in the palliative hedges'. In short, no matter what kind of hedges, conversion was always effective in translation.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that translators should choose the corresponding translation methods according to the specific situation for various types of hedges. In dealing with variable hedges, equivalence is usually adopted, followed by lexical conversion, deletion and addition. For the palliative hedges, the most common method was equivalent translation, followed by semantic conversion, lexical conversion, deletion and addition.

5. Data Analysis of Hedges in Outward Propaganda Texts

(1) Features of language use in English. According to the data analysis of the features of the hedges, it could be seen that the variable hedges were much larger than the palliative hedges in terms of token and type, mainly because its function was to limit the scope and degree of information in outward propaganda texts to ensure its rigor. Moreover, in terms of vocabulary, the vocabulary of variable hedges was much larger than that of palliative, among which the usage of tentativity-concluded type hedges was higher than that of subjectivity-pointed type's and objectivity-based type's. Since outward propaganda text often involves a lot, such as in order to ensure the readability, in order to reduce the ambiguity of the text and in order to make the meaning of the text understandable for most people, it generally uses the words such as "主要问题" and "重要决定". In other cases, the government will generally use hedges such as "必将" and "一定" with exploratory and summative features to show what it has done and achieved in the past, so as to increase the public's trust in and expectations of it.

(2) Translation techniques of hedges. By research and analysis, it was found that the translation of hedges in outward propaganda texts did not need word-to-word correspondence, but needed to combine occasions and specific contexts to choose appropriate translation means for flexible use. That is, although hedges are common in all languages, due to the distinctions between Eastern and Western cultures and languages, there are also great distinctions in expression and rhetoric, which is also the most-difficult in the translating process.[12] By analysis of the techniques and methods adopted by translators in translating hedges in outward propaganda texts, it was found that the equivalent translation method was generally used in the translation process, which was highly consistent with the findings of the previous Eppler-Hattab's experiment.

By previous analysis, we can find that the equivalent translation method is the preferred translation method for different types of hedges. In the translation of variable hedges, lexical conversion was usually used, while in the translation of palliative hedges, semantic conversion was used in many ways.

Furthermore, different types of hedges differ greatly in the frequency and proportion in the application of translation techniques, which is mainly due to the pragmatic function and semantic features of hedges. In official discourse like outward propaganda texts, adverbs are widely used because the purpose is to limit the content. However, English is a relatively static language, most of its expressions are composed

of nouns, so in order to better adapt to the features of English vocabulary, it is necessary to change the class of words in translation.[13]

6. Conclusion

This study is mainly based on our parallel bilingual corpus, and adopts qualitative and quantitative analysis methods. This paper probes into the features and translation techniques of hedges in outward propaganda texts, and draws the following conclusions:

(1) There are various types of hedges in political texts, and their English equivalents are different.

(2) When translating hedges in outward propaganda texts, translators generally take equivalent translation as the main method, supplemented by other methods such as lexical conversion, addition and deletion. At the same time, there are certain distinctions in the methods adopted by translators when translating hedges in different contexts and different occasions.

From the perspective of Chinese-English bilingual translation, this paper makes an in-depth analysis of the translation skills and strategies of hedges in outward propaganda texts, which is not only certain relatively significant for English translation teaching, but is also certain practically significant for English translation skills in various scenarios. However, this paper only investigated the translation techniques of 6 high-frequency hedges, which has certain limitations. Therefore, in future studies, it is necessary to continuously expand the research samples and objects, so as to achieve a comprehensive and systematic exploration of translation techniques of more types of hedges.

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