

Application of Reiss's Text Typology in Translation based on Corpus: A Case Study of Boao Forum for Asia

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Abstract

In recent years, the Reiss's text typology not only provides a theoretical basis for the translator's choice of translation strategies, but also provides a theoretical basis for the corresponding research of corpus. According to it, translation strategies are determined by the text type of source texts, and there is no single absolute translation strategy that can be used in all translation practice. Guided by the theory, this paper will illustrate how text typology can guide translation activities and how to translate political and economic speeches more accurately in translation activities according to the examples in the English-Chinese bilingual parallel corpora of Boao Forum for Asia.

Keywords

Reiss's Text Typology; Corpus-based Study; Boao Forum for Asia.

1. Introduction

This paper presents the findings of a qualitative and quantitative analysis undertaken to investigate how Reiss's text typology guides translation activities in political and economic speeches, using the parallel corpus of bilingual Chinese and English from the Annual Meeting Reports of Boao Forum for Asia in 2016, 2018, 2019 and 2021 as a case study. (There is no official English translation version in 2017 and 2018.) Rather than merely provide speculative explanations of regularities observed in texts, this study uses a mixed-methods approach to empirically investigate possible translation guidance of political and economic texts for the translators: it quantitatively examines the word frequency of the source language in political and economic speeches and the emotional functions expressed by words in the text, and qualitatively analyzes the linguistic features and communication functions of keywords.

'Text type' is a highly contradictory and debatable term. Different linguists use other terms instead of 'text type', such as 'genre', 'register', 'discourse type' to refer to similar phenomena (for an exhaustive overview of these and other related terms, see Trosborg 1997a). In this article 'text types' are used as a broad term to refer to conventional kinds of texts used for specific communicative situations (cf. Sager 1997). A text is said to belong to a specific text type if it has 'recognizable structural and rhetorical features which condition our modes of reading a message'[5]. Text structures become recognizable and speakers have certain expectations for them since texts are regularly repeated in conventional communicative situations [5]. Our shared knowledge about text types and prior familiarity with them help us to interpret individual texts with less effort. In this way awareness of text types is of crucial importance in communication in general. In addition, text types should also be taken into account in such specific and practical enterprises as translation (cf. Steiner 1998). As Schaffner cogently argues, 'the linguistic knowledge cannot be seen as an autonomous system, largely independent of socio-cultural knowledge'[6]. Awareness of text types unavoidably involves socio-cultural knowledge, as will be demonstrated in the present analysis of speech translations.

This paper discusses two main questions: (1) According to Reiss's text typology, what text type does political and economic texts belong to? (2) How is the text typology used in the translation

of political and economic texts? Next, I explained how this research was conducted, and gave the quantitative and qualitative results of the study, paying special attention to some words in translation that can clearly distinguish the text types.

2. Reiss's Text Typology

In the 1970s, based on the equivalence theory, Katharina Reiss put forward text typology in accordance with the categorization of the three functions of language by German linguist Karl Bühler. In Karl's work, he divides the language functions into three categories: informative function; expressive function and appellative function. Borrowing from Karl's method of classification, Reiss links the three functions to their corresponding language 'dimensions' and to the text types or communicative situations in which they are used. Nowadays it is commonly agreed that equivalence in translation has to be sought not on the level of individual words or even sentence level, but should be based on larger segments. Reiss (1977, as cited in Munday 2001) suggests that equivalence is to be sought at the level of a text (also cf. Sager 1997). She argues that the language of translation depends on the text type or the communicative situation, since different types of spoken or written discourse have different communicative functions. So she divides texts into three main types and a supplementary one, namely informative texts, expressive texts, operative texts and audio-medial texts. Reiss summarized the main of each text type. Informative text type: 'Plain communication of facts': information, knowledge, opinions, etc. The language dimension used to transmit the information is logical or referential, the content or 'topic' is the main focus of the communication. Expressive text type: 'Creative composition': the author uses the aesthetic dimension of language. The author or 'sender' is foregrounded, as well as the form of the message. Operative text type: 'Inducing behavioural responses': the aim of the appellative function is to appeal to or persuade the reader or 'receiver' of the text to act in a certain way, for example to buy a product (if an advert), or to agree to an argument (if a political speech or a barrister's concluding statement). The form of language is dialogic and the focus is appellative. Audio-medial texts, such as films and visual and spoken advertisements which supplement the other three functions with visual images, music, etc.

The text types classified on the basis of these functions oversimplify the existing variety of texts and make the divisions between text types too strict, since in practice most texts can be seen as hybrid types. As Trosborg rightly points out, a 'real text will display features of more than one type... (this) multi functionality is the rule rather than the exception' [8]. Similarly, Bhatia observes that texts often do not belong to pure genres, but rather appear in 'mixed or embedded forms' [1]. Nevertheless, these functions (on the basis of which texts can be classified) draw attention to the importance of text typology in translation. When translating, the function of the text has to be kept in mind to achieve the desired effect. As Trosborg suggests, 'the reader's (client or consumer, etc.) interest must be constantly matched against the communicative intent of the producer of the source text' [9]. Furthermore, Trosborg (1997a) argues that translation of a certain kind of text, for instance, an advertisement, has to be adjusted to the purpose it serves (in this case, a persuasive effect). In the act of translation it is important to keep in mind that 'translational action focuses very much on producing a TT that is functionally communicative to the receiver' [2]. For this reason, the form and language of the translated (or target) text (henceforth TT) has to be stylistically and functionally adequate. If the source text (henceforth ST) is both informative and persuasive, the TT has to be sufficiently informative and persuasive as well. Failure to take into account the expected effect of the ST can result in the failure to convey 'the communicative intention of a message and may easily lead to misunderstandings' [9]. Trosborg rightly sums up that 'failure to recognize the illocutionary force of single utterance as well as the superordinate communicative intent of the text act can

be a major stumbling block in establishing the aims of discourse and may result in faulty translations' [9].

However, text types are categorized according to their main function. For some texts, they don't belong to one single text type, that is, a source text can be an expressive text from one point of view and also an operative text from another. These texts that belong to more than one text types simultaneously are called hybrid types. For example, a biography might be somewhere between the informative and expressive types, because it provides some information about the author for readers while it also conforms to the aesthetic standards as a literature and performs the expressive function of language. In addition, a religious speech may belong to operative type as well as informative type, since it gives some information about the religion and meanwhile it achieves the operative function by trying to persuade the audience to do something in a certain way. Therefore, some texts with this kind of hybrid character have not only one language function but several functions mixed together. Political and economic English texts are unique. Under the guidance of Reiss's text typology, this paper puts forward how to choose translation strategies when translating political and economic speeches, which can provide reference for political and economic workers in translation and English writing.

3. Data and Method

Corpus data for this study derive from a bilingual parallel corpora of BFA (Boao Forum for Asia). The corpus collected a total of four years of bilingual documents in Chinese and English from the Annual Meeting Reports of the Boao Forum for Asia, they are 2016, 2018, 2019 and 2021(see the Table 1). It mainly focus on economic and political topics. The word count of the transcribed source discourse is 115823 Chinese characters and that of the transcribed target discourse is 57308 English characters. After collecting the data, the Antconc was used.

Table 1. Corpus Source

YEAR	WEBSITE
2016	Boao Forum for Asia https://www.boaoforum.org/ljnh/en/2016anhydt/26755.htm
2018	Boao Forum for Asia https://www.boaoforum.org/ljnh/en/2018flt23en/37177.htm
2019	Boao Forum For Asia Annual Conference 2019 Partner Acknowledgements-News-Boao Forum for Asia https://www.boaoforum.org/ljnh/en/2019hyst/45137.htm
2021	Boao Forum for Asia https://english.boaoforum.org/newsDetial.html?navId=6&itemId=3&permissionId=168&detialId=5470

After collecting the data, the next phase was to identify the strategies applied by the translator using the microstructural analysis. It compared both the ST (Source Text) and TT (Target Text) in two different parts. Afterwards, from the comparison, the text typology can be identified by the identification of the selection of words from the ST to TT and the sentence's form in from the ST to TT.

Firstly, for the text of informative text type, translator needs to transmit all the contents of the ST without redundancy, so that the translation should be explicit and brief. The translation of an economic report, for instance, should focus on the transmission of the content such as specific information and terminology, rather than the literary style used by the author. Secondly, for the text of expressive text type, the method of "identifying" should be adopted. The translated version should reflect the artistic form and aesthetic features of the ST, in addition ensuring the accuracy of information. So the translator is required to hold the same perspective as the author does and be faithful to the original text. Thirdly, in order to produce an

anticipative effect among the TT readers, the text of operative text type should be translated by employing the method of “adapting”. For example, the translation of an advertisement can make itself more appealing to its receivers through adding some new words or pictures. Finally, as a supplementary text type, audiomedial texts are always in the form of visual pictures or music to supplement the other three functions of written words. Therefore, the method of “supplement” is proposed by Reiss to solve this kind of text, which means some images, videos and music are added to supplement written words. Therefore, my quantitative analysis examined text types in general across all speeches; then, the qualitative analysis examined how and why the selection and comprehension of text types were relevant to discourse structure and context. In terms of the method for the case study, the corpus-based text typology is informed with the analysis of linguistic feature and communication function.

4. Analysis

Translations of political and economic types of speeches are important for very practical reasons. A professionally translated these kind of speeches can show the level of the speaker and can help to avoid intercultural miscommunication. Speech at the annual meeting of Boao Forum for Asia serves as an informative text that provides details about the Domestic and international political situation and global economic development in the recent year; more importantly, a speech not only presents information, but also reflects the the image of the country the spokesman represents. In this sense, speech is an important means of cultural exchange and are appellative in their nature. In addition, speeches represent a country and its culture. Thus the importance of speeches is predetermined by the purpose and the functions that such a text type performs. Therefore, this article discusses the techniques used in speech translations in relation to text typology and discourse analysis.

Although there exist many hybrid types, Reiss states that ‘the transmission of the predominant function of the ST is the determining factor by which the TT is judged’. She suggests ‘specific translation methods according to text type’ [4]. From her, the primary factor that affects the selection of translation methods is text type. She also lists some specific methods for translators to deal with different text types.

In a word, Reiss’s theory about text type not only provides a way for translators to identify the categories of the ST, but also gives the certain translation methods for each text type, which paves a clearer path for translators to conduct translation activities.

According to Liu Junping, Reiss believes that the ideal target texts should be those that are equivalent to the source text in terms of conceptual content, linguistic form and communicative function [11]. In this part, two aspects will be presented to analyze the ST: analyzing the linguistic features and communicative function.

4.1. Quantitative Analysis

With the corpus analytical tool of AntConc, a word frequency list of the corpus is generated. As can be seen in figure 1 among the top 20 most frequently used words in the source text, there are nine content words: 发展 (“development”), with a frequency of 564, 经济 (“economy”), with a frequency of 551, 年 (“year”), with a frequency of 473, 全球 (“global”), with a frequency of 342, 企业 (“enterprise”), with a frequency of 300, 亚洲 (“Asia”), with a frequency of 29, 新 (“new”), with a frequency of 283, 合作 (“cooperation”), with a frequency of 270, 技术 (“technology”), with a frequency of 259.

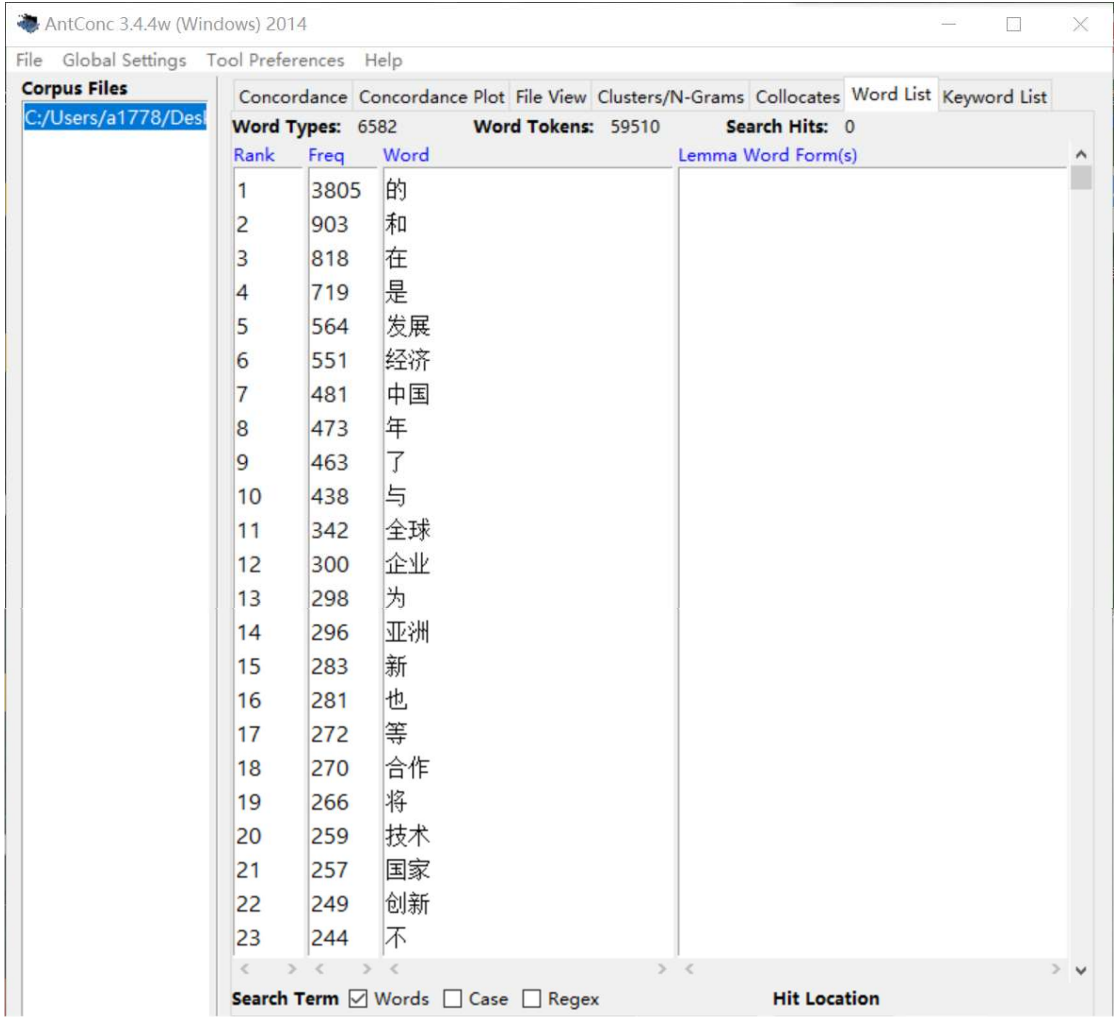


Figure 1. Word Frequency List

As can be seen from the figure 1 that among the words with the highest frequency, content words account for a large proportion. Therefore, it can be seen that in political and economic speeches, the language used tends to be the standard written language.

Table 2. Text Types of Selected Words

WORD	WORD FREQUENCY	ANALYSIS
欢迎(welcome)	5	expressive
解决(solve, overcome,etc.)	62	operative informative
希望(hope) verb.	21	operative
感谢(thank)	2	expressive operative
要(be to, need, have)verb.	156	informative
有(have, be found)	199	informative

In Table 2, account for these real words all involve three major text types, I selected “欢迎”、“解决”、“希望”、“感谢”、“要”、“有”these representative real words, which appeared most frequently in the speech, and the same word expressed different emotions in different contexts.

Then I analyzed the text types by macro-observation through word frequency. According to the original content, the “欢迎” is all expressive; “解决” is sometimes operative and sometimes informative; “希望” is all operative; “感谢” is sometimes expressive and sometimes operative; “要” and “有” are all informative.

4.2. Qualitative Analysis

4.2.1. Linguistic Features of the ST

The first linguistic feature is that the language was written in a formal style, which makes the speeches more powerful. As a kind of applied literature, BFA annual speeches are usually used in some solemn occasions, such as inauguration, graduation ceremony, and memorial meeting. Generally, the language in most speeches is elegant and formal, without slangs.

ST: I hope that at this year's annual conference, the guests will engage in in-depth discussions and brainstorming regarding the major challenges confronting Asia and the world in the wake of the pandemic, under the theme “The World in Covid-19 & Beyond: Working Together for Global Development and Shared Future,” so as to deepen mutual understanding, bridge divides and build consensus.

TT: 希望在今年的年会上，各位嘉宾围绕“疫情与世界：共促全球发展，构建共同未来”的主题，聚焦疫情后亚洲与世界面临的重大现实挑战，碰撞思想、加深理解，为弥合分化、凝聚共识做出努力与贡献！

Back Translation: I hope that at this year's annual meeting, guests will focus on the theme of “The Epidemic and the World: Promoting Global Development and Building a Common Future”, focus on the major real-life challenges facing Asia and the world in the aftermath of the epidemic, exchange ideas and deepen understanding, and make efforts and contributions to bridging divides and building consensus.

(id=TT31.14, AC 2021).

ST: We would like to extend our warmest welcome as we look forward to yet another successful conference.

TT: 值此盎然四月，热情欢迎大家再次汇聚于此，同赏春光，共叙友谊。

Back Translation: On the occasion of this abundant April, we warmly welcome all of you to gather here again to enjoy the spring scenery and share friendship.

(id=TT24.2, AC 2022).

ST: Friends old and new to the Boao Forum for Asia, thank you all for attending the 2022 Boao Forum Annual Conference online or in-person to discuss topics such as world peace, the global order, the pandemic, development and security, solidarity and cooperation.

TT: 非常感谢各位博鳌亚洲论坛的新老朋友通过线上或线下方式出席论坛2022年年会，共议和平与秩序，疫情与世界，发展与安全，团结与合作。

Back Translation: I would like to thank all the old and new friends of Boao Forum for Asia for attending the 2022 annual meeting of the Forum online or offline to discuss peace and order, epidemic situation and the world, development and security, unity and cooperation.

(id=TT23.1, AC 2022).

Some abstract nouns were used in these Example, such as “deepen”, “bridge” and “engage”. Those words are called “big words”, with the ambiguous meanings, which are usually used in some formal texts to make the texts more standard and difficulty. So when translated this sentence, the translator should choose the corresponding words, like “弥合”, “聚焦”, to keep the original style.

The second linguistic feature embodies on the choice of personal pronoun. The speaker used “we” to strengthen the sense of identity, shorten the distance between the speaker and audience, and achieve the aim of infecting the audience.

As a Chinese saying goes, unity means power. In this case, promoting the peace and development of all countries in the world in the post-epidemic era is not only the task of the speaker, but the task of every audience. By using “we”, the speaker could unite every audience as a whole. Therefore, to choose an appropriate pronoun may make the speech become more appealing.

4.2.2. Communication Function of the ST

The source text is the annual conference journal of Boao Forum for Asia in recent years, covering political visions, world economic trends, global development landscape and more. Boao Forum for Asia provides a high-level dialogue platform for governments, enterprises, experts and scholars to discuss economic, social, environmental and other related issues. The Forum was originally established to promote economic integration in Asia. The mission of the Forum today is to gather positive energy for the development of Asia and the world. With its expanding scale and influence, the Boao Forum for Asia has played a unique role in gathering consensus from all sides, deepening regional cooperation, promoting common development and solving Asian and global problems, becoming an important bridge connecting China and the world, and an international exchange platform with both Asian characteristics and global influence.

ST: 我们用改革的办法解决了党和国家事业发展中的一系列问题。

TT: We have overcome many problems hindering the development of the Party and the state through reform.

Back Translation: 我们通过改革克服了许多阻碍党和国家事业发展的的问题。

(id=TT1.28, AC 2016).

ST: If the world is to achieve low-carbon development, the energy and chemical industry must take the lead in achieving zero carbon emissions.

TT: 全球若要实现低碳发展，能源化工行业必须要率先达到零碳排放。

Back Translation: To achieve global low-carbon development, the energy and chemical industry must take the lead in achieving zero carbon emissions.

(id=TT11.37, AC 2021).

ST: Much of the industrial upgrading undertaken by developing countries can in fact be found in developed countries and the Chinese government can capitalize on the trend and guide the development of industries with weaknesses.

TT: 发展中国家有相当多的产业升级实际上在发达国家已经有了，政府应当因势利导这种短板产业的发展。

Back Translation: There are quite a few industrial upgrades in developing countries, which have actually been done in developed countries. The government should take advantage of the situation to guide the development of this short-board industry.

(id=TT2.83, AC 2016).

The above content involves political vision and planning, describes some difficulties in the development of China and the world, and encourages people to work together to overcome these difficulties and how to overcome them. At the same time, the speaker also conveyed his belief that the stable development of the national cause and the success of the stable development of the world, and expressed his beautiful expectations for the future of the world. Through the analysis of the original text, the author thinks that the expected communicative function of the speech is to infect the audience, that is, to realize the operational function. In

other words, the purpose of a speech is to attract the audience so that they can consciously support the speaker.

Considering the context, the speaker emphasizes not only the result of what the government behaves, but also the impact and effect, because the government has done some very effective work and benefited the people in recent years. Through the analysis of the ST, the writer believes that the intended communicative function of the Boao Forum for Asia speeches and interviews is to fully convey the referential and conceptual content of the ST, and that the translation should be straightforward and easy to understand without redundancy, and if necessary, the ST needed explication.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

There has been a long debate within the field of translation studies about whether it is possible to classify texts and whether such a classification is useful for practising translators. As Hatim and Munday remark, there are two major problems related to the kind of text typologies currently available. First of all, the very notion of text type is so broad that it can comprise a large number of text-form variants. For instance, texts as varied as legal acts, technical instructions, sermons, political speeches and advertisements can all be included in the text type "instruction". The second substantial difficulty related to text typologies is the issue of hybridisation, that is the fact that a certain text often includes several different types.

Nevertheless, text typologies and their role in identifying the text purpose and function as well as the author's intention are still perceived as valuable tools for translators, enabling them to establish the appropriate hierarchy of equivalence levels and choose such strategies that would best serve to preserve the given purpose, function and intention.

It can be seen that Reiss's text typology is of great significance for guiding translation practice. Based on the theory of equivalence, text typology has broken the traditional concept of equivalence which only focused on the level of pure language, rather it viewed the whole text as the level at which the equivalence is achieved and at which the communicative function is realized.

I have a further understanding about text typology and Functionalist Approach to Translation through applying the theories to translation practice. I believe that language was born as a tool for human beings to communicate with each other, while translation builds a bridge to make it possible for people from different nations to communicate successfully. Nevertheless, the writer still doesn't agree that translation is just a simple transmission between languages. In the process of translation, language functions as well as communicative functions must be considered. As what Nida says "the readers of a translated text should be able to understand and appreciate it in essentially the same manner as the original readers did", the translated texts should produce an effect on the target readers as same as what the original texts do to the original readers.

There are two lessons that the writer has learned from the case analysis. The first one is that before starting translation, a translator may identify the text type and stylistic features of the ST, which may help the translator to understand the ST better. The second one is that it is necessary for translators to adopt different strategies for different types of the text under the guidance of related translation theory. Therefore,

I think Reiss's text typology is useful for translators to conduct translation practice. In addition, I hope more translation practice will continue and deepen the understanding of text typology in the future.

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