

Translation Matters

Impact of two English renditions of one Chinese political text on international readers

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This paper begins with a brief historic review of political translation in China but its main concern is with investigating the impact of two English renditions of a text authored by a Chinese leader and widely publicised in China. One rendition had been produced for a 'journalistic' purpose and is seen as 'faulty'. The other had been produced by 'accuracy-minded' translators and is seen as the official 'correct' version. The investigation was designed to address three questions. Question 1 was whether the two translations impacted differently. Question 2 was, if and where they did evoke significantly different responses, which one received a more positive response. Question 3 was on what basis the respondents formed their assessments. A number of surprise findings emerged, providing cause and evidence for reflections on some of the familiar claims made about translation.

Keywords: Translation, political translation, impact study, functional, China, Eight Honors and Eight Shames

Weight of Chinese supreme leaders' language

The language of national political leaders usually matters, which is especially true in a country like China with the Chinese Communist Party constitutionally enshrined as its core. This is reflected during the Cultural Revolution by the well-known claim made by Lin Biao the late right-hand man of Chairman Mao that any one sentence by the Chairman more than equalled

ten thousand sentences by anyone else. Since then, China has changed greatly but undoubtedly what its current supreme leaders say continue to exert great influence in shaping the condition and destiny of the country, even though they may have to say a bit more and reiterate a bit more in order to make as much impact as their predecessors.

On 4 March, 2006, supreme leader Hu Jintao (the Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party from 2002 to 2012, Chairman of the People's Republic of China from 2003 to 2012 and the Commander General of the People's Liberation Army from 2004 to 2012) spoke at the 4th plenary meeting of the 10th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. An extract of what he said on that occasion was immediately publicised under the title of 'The Eight Honours and Eight Shames'¹ and created an enormous bang. While it was difficult to quantify the extent of the impact, which is not the immediate concern anyway of the investigation discussed in the present paper, suffice it to say that it became the text to study and discuss nation-wide in China. This continued till the moment when this paper was drafted.

'The Eight Honours and Eight Shames' appears to describe a list of honourable and shameful behaviours. But in the Chinese political and social discourse, it also involves and implicates a pattern of acts and actions including those of addressing subjects and giving commandments for the purpose of governing, i.e., specifying the do's and don'ts for the Chinese citizens. By pronouncing the maxim, Chairman Hu signals his desire to rule by honouring or shaming his subjects, i.e., not only by the gun or by the law but also importantly by a supreme set of values and morals. In other words, the maxim is intended to exude authority, define morality, mark boundaries and shape behaviours.

As well as specifying the do's and don'ts, 'The Eight Honours and Shames' is also noteworthy with regard to its formal and so-called 'poetic' style. It is phrased in rhetorically loaded language rather than in straightforward plain language. The rhetorical devices built into the maxim include: the use of dichotic language (for contrasting 'honour' to 'shame') in eight pairs of statements, syntactic symmetry and repetition in the structure of the statements,

the strict use of seven characters in each statement and the inclusion of many four-character idioms or idiom-like phrases containing allusions to ancient legends, wisdom and personalities. Many of these may seem unnecessarily repetitive, excessive or pedantic to non-Chinese readers, but fluency in using them contributes to the charismatic look of Chinese leaders. Olesen (2006), who first quoted 'The Eight Honours and Eight Shames' in Associated Press (AP), noted that 'for centuries, Chinese leaders have tried, usually in vain, to mould public and official behaviour with poetic maxims'.

Translating Chinese supreme leaders

The importance of what Chinese supreme leaders say is also reflected in the efforts that have gone into translation. Such political translation has been 'an officially sanctioned project of exporting literature and ideology since 1950s' (Ma 2006, p.17) and serves the political purpose of 'fostering an understanding in the foreigners about Chinese situations and policies' (Chang 2004: 55). The great efforts and investments that have gone into political translation understandably led to an enormous output. For example, Mao's *Little Red Book* was translated into 37 foreign languages and sold over 10 million copies to 182 countries (Wei 2004) and *Mao Zedong's Poems* was translated into 16 languages, including multiple translations in major foreign languages like English and French (Yang 1999). It is difficult for 'The Eight Honours and Eight Shames' to match up in terms of efforts or outcome with Mao's record. Nevertheless, within a matter of days, the maxim was translated into numerous renditions, including the five discussed in Lin (2006) and later critically examined in Zhong (2011).

The importance of translating Chinese supreme leaders understandably requires great meticulous attention for producing 'correct' renditions. A story indicating the extent of this attention goes like this: When interviewed by American correspondent Anna Louise Strong, Chairman Mao declared that 一切反动派都是纸老虎. The declaration was first translated into 'all reactionaries are scarecrows' before it was immediately changed into 'all reactionaries are

¹ A Chinese video interpretation/representation of the maxim can be seen on the following link: http://v.youku.com/v_playlist/f986429o1p0.html

² Details of the incident and the interaction between Mao and the translator can be found at: <http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/52157707.html> and <http://baike.baidu.com/view/124681.htm>.

paper tigers' at the personal intervention by Chairman Mao². Well known as a mantra to many Chinese political translators, this story was often intended to reinforce the Chinese discourse of translation, which is overwhelmingly concerned with 'accurate', 'correct', 'complete', and 'comprehensive' reflection of the truth (Zhong 2011).

No matter how important it is, however, there is little empirical knowledge about the impact of the many translations of supreme Chinese leaders. Speculations and claims have been made, including that the 'unilateral export' of Chinese supreme leaders' works was often not very English-looking and failed to register much impact on the target readers (Chang 2004, Ma 2006). But I know of no attempts having been made to use verifiable quantitative research methodologies to study the impact of political translations on real, living native English readers. The investigation discussed in this paper constitutes the very first of its kind in (and very likely beyond) China.

Impact studies

Empirical study of impact on real, living subjects is commonplace in many disciplines where it may assume different jargons. For example, in television studies, it is known as reception studies or audience ethnography, examples of which include Morley (1980) and Ang (1985, 1991 and 1996). Zhong (2003) has also conducted such impact studies of Chinese television audiences. These examples are cited because they inspired the present investigation and its use of methods.

Though impact of translation on human history and social development is well recognized, it is often taken for granted. For example, there are scholarly writings, such as the one by Fang (2005), which discuss how translations changed a nation or a society. But there are very few empirical evidence-based studies of the impact of translation on real, living people until very recently. Of the pioneering translation impact studies, Berk-Seligson (2002) investigated the impact of treatments of politeness and use of swear words on US jury. Zhong and Lin (2007) studied the impact of foreignized and domesticated translations on Guangzhou readers of *Gone with the Wind*. Zhong and Lin's project was replicated in Taiwan by Wang et al (2009). Xi and Zhong (2008) surveyed responses to free and literal interpretations in Australian courts. The project discussed in the present paper is intended to add to this limited

literature regarding translation impacts and generate evidence to substantiate and/or repudiate some existing assumptions about 'correct' political translations especially prevalent in China.

Research methodologies, questions, questionnaires, survey

Research questions

To study the impact of two heuristically typical but different English translations of 'The Eight Honours and Eight Shames' on authentic English readers, the project was designed to address three research questions, which are:

1. Do the respondents think differently about the two texts presented to them?
2. Do the respondents react more favourably to the 'correct' translation than to the other one?
3. Why do the respondents think what they think? That is, what are the considerations that motivate them to react to the texts the way they do?

The two renditions

The study involved inviting respondents to view and assess two different renditions of 'The Eight Honours and Eight Shames' even though the surveyors strenuously avoided revealing them as translations by referring to them simply as 'texts'. The investigator looked through many different renditions available of the same source text and decided to select the one by Xinhua News Agency and the one drafted by Ding (2006), the latter of which was endorsed by Translators Association of China (TAC) as the 'correct' official translation. During the interview, the former was always referred to as Text A and the latter as Text B in the presence of any respondents in order to avoid predisposing any respondents while making their judgements. But in the discussions of this paper, the former will be known as the 'journalistic' text and the latter as the 'correct' text for the purpose of enhanced clarity. The naming is purely functional and heuristic and does not reflect an academic assessment of either text.

Text A (the 'journalistic' text), authored by Xinhua News Agency

- 1) Love the Motherland, do her no harm.
- 2) Serve the people, never betray them.
- 3) Follow science, discard fatuity.
- 4) Be diligent, not indolent.
- 5) Be united and help each other, make no gains at others expenses.
- 6) Be honest and trustworthy, do not spend ethics for profits.
- 7) Be disciplined and law-abiding, not chaotic and lawless.
- 8) Live plainly and work hard, do not wallow in luxuries and pleasures.

(71 words)

Text B (the 'correct' text), authored by Ding and finalized by Translators Association of China

- 1) Honour to those who love the motherland, and shame on those who harm the motherland;
- 2) Honour to those who serve the people, and shame on those who betray the people;
- 3) Honour to those who quest for science, and shame on those who refuse to be educated;
- 4) Honour to those who are hardworking; and shame on those who indulge in comfort and hate work;
- 5) Honour to those who help each other, and shame on those who seek gains at the expense of others;
- 6) Honour to those who are trustworthy, and shame on those who trade integrity for profits;
- 7) Honour to those who abide by law and discipline, and shame on those who break laws and disciplines;
- 8) Honour to those who uphold plain living and hard struggle and shame on those who wallow in extravagance and pleasures.

(145 words)

The primary criterion guiding the selection of the texts was 'difference', meaning that the two texts should be as drastically different as possible in terms of function, style, presentation, and authorship. Furthermore, as the investigator had a critical view of the many claims about 'correctness' or otherwise of renditions in Chinese translation, he deliberately looked for two texts that were respectively declared as 'correct' and 'faulty' so that the study

could produce findings that either corroborate or collapse the claims. The two texts selected fully fulfill the primary criteria, as is obvious from the following discussions.

On the one hand, the 'journalistic' text, which was very similar to a rendition used by Associated Press, was produced soon after Chairman Hu issued the maxim and with a sense of urgency typical of journalism. It was minimalist with 71 words, had little rhetorical decorations and appeared very straightforward. Rather than conveying what the words (e.g., honours and shames) meant, it was apparently intended to reflect the political and moral function of Chairman Hu's message, i.e., prescribing boundaries and instructing his subjects what to do and what not to do.

On the other hand, the 'correct' text was the outcome of lengthy and profound deliberation and the crystallization of the collective wisdom of top-ranking official translators. It was maximalist with 145 words, loaded with excessive rhetorical devices (e.g., repetition and symmetry) and written in strictly grammatical whole sentences complete with the use of many erudite words (e.g., 'indulging in comfort and hating work') and studious collocations (e.g., 'being undisciplined and breaking the law'). It was strictly intended to convey the 'height', the 'depth', the 'intensity', the 'elegance' and the 'beauty' of the maxim and it possesses literary, linguistic as well as political qualities (Ding 2006).

Quantitative survey and the Questionnaire

To generate data on the basis of which to address the research questions, the study adopted two research procedures. First, there was a quantitative survey designed to address questions No 1 and No 2. In the survey, each sampled respondent was invited to review the two texts and then to complete a questionnaire, through which they indicated the extent to which they agreed with 15 statements about the two texts. They were simply told that they were reviewing two texts. Great efforts were taken not to reveal that the two texts were actually renditions of the same source text by the same author and that they were ultimately traced to a supreme Chinese leader.

While reviewing the two texts, the respondents were required to indicate a degree of agreement with a list of paired statements about each text. The five preset degrees were 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'neither agree nor disagree',

'agree' and 'strongly agree'. In the subsequent statistical analysis, the responses were to be translated into Likert scales, 1 for 'strongly disagree', 2 for 'disagree', 3 for 'neither agree nor disagree', 4 for 'agree' and 5 for 'strongly agree' and the values were computed. Statistics generated in response to a statement regarding one translation was to be compared to the statistics generated in response to the same statement regarding the other translation. The idea was that the researchers would then be able to tell whether there was statistically significant differences between responses to (i.e., perceptions about) the two translations.

A list of 15 pairs of identical statements was constructed. Where there was one statement about one of the two translations, there was the same statement about the other translation. The 15 statements, which comprised the questionnaire, are:

1. The author must be a great political leader.
2. The author must be well-educated.
3. The text is authored by an honest politician.
4. I would like to have the author as a national leader of my country.
5. The text is easy to understand.
6. The author must be good at managing a country.
7. The author must have great artistic talent.
8. The text speaks the truth of the author.
9. I enjoy reading the text.
10. The text fascinates me.
11. The author must be a leader of a great country.
12. The author must be highly cultivated culturally.
13. The text is effective for discouraging wrongdoings.
14. I take the text seriously.
15. The text has messages that are easy to remember.

The construction of the questionnaire has been informed by discussions of political leadership qualities. They include especially discussions of political visions by Baumgartner (1989), Grove (2007) and Nye (2008), discussions of abilities to communicate vision by Gardner and Laskin (1995), discussions of personal charisma by Cherniss (2006) and Nye (2008) and discussions of solidarity with the people by Midlarsky (1989) and Nye (2008). The 15 statements are intended to extract perceptions of the respondents about the author of 'The Eight Honours and Eight Shames' via the two renditions. In other words, do the two translations prompt similar perceptions in the

native English reading respondents sampled for this project in a number of heuristically-constructed aspects. No 1, No 6 and No 11 state the author to be a great and capable statesman. No 2, No 7 and No 12 describe the author as a man of great literary, artistic and cultural quality. No 3, No 8 and No 13 are about the credibility of the text. No 4, No 9 and No 14 presumably articulate the personal preference of the respondents. No 5, No 10 and No 15 concern the accessibility and effectivity of the text. The statements of the same category had been intentionally spaced out in the list in order to minimise second guessing by the respondents when they tackled the questionnaire.

The respondents

A total of 113 respondents were engaged in the present study. In four separate groups, each of between 20 and 30, all of them participated in the quantitative survey and 64 of them in the subsequent voluntary qualitative interview. The sample was put together on the basis of the assumptions that

1. The translation of the 'The Eight Honours and Eight Shames' targeted international readers, especially English readers
2. Mature and educated English readers would be more susceptible to the 'height', the 'depth', the 'intensity', the 'elegance' and the 'beauty' of the maxim.
3. People of immediate Mainland Chinese identity or heritage are more likely than average to be biased to or against what a Chinese communist leader says.

On the basis of the assumptions, the following criteria were strictly conformed to in sampling. Table 1 presents a profile of the respondents sampled for the study.

1. A respondent must have been either born in an English-speaking country (e.g., Australia, England and Singapore) or educated entirely in English language medium since year one of primary school.
2. A respondent must have been awarded a first degree (e.g., bachelor of arts or bachelor of science).
3. Anyone personally born in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong was not eligible to be a respondent.

Table 1. Profiling the sample

Respondents in kinds	No of People
People born in an English speaking country (including 29 Australia-born Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese etc)	89
People born in a non-English speaking country but educated entirely in English since primary school	24
Males	48
Females	65
People in full-time employment	64
People continuing education after 1 st degree	30
People in unemployment, part-time employment or retirement not continuing education	19

Qualitative interview to find out WHY

At the end of the quantitative survey, the respondents were invited to stay for a short open-ended ‘chat’ with the interviewers on a voluntary basis. Those who stayed were asked to offer up to three comments, any comments, on either or both of the texts. The comments were recorded and coded in order to shed light on why the respondents thought what they thought about the texts. If the quantitative survey were to reveal any significant differences in responses to the two texts, this qualitative investigation was intended to complement the former by finding out what may have prompted the responses.

Data Analyses

The quantitative survey was conducted, from which the data collected was subjected to statistical analysis by SPSS (i.e., Statistics Program for Social Sciences) and the outcome is presented in Table 2. To facilitate reading of the data, I will now state the conventions by which the legends are used in the table. Starting from the left, the numbers in the first column signal the 15 statements used in the survey. Statements of the same heuristic categories are listed in clumps. The ‘df’ in the second column is a statistical term and indicates

the degrees of freedom, i.e., the number of values in the final calculation of a statistic that are free to vary (Walker 1940). In this table, it indicates the number of individual respondents that go into the statistics. Then there is the statistics comparing responses to the two translations, i.e., the journalistic version (represented as ‘A’) vs the ‘correct’ version (represented as ‘B’). ‘Mean’ indicates the difference values between the mean of responses to a statement about A and the mean of responses to the same statement about B. A positive value indicates a higher (more favourable) response to a statement about A than B and a negative value indicates a lower (less favourable) response to a statement about A than B. In the next column, ‘Std Deviation’ (for standard

Table 2. Data presented statistically

Statement	df	Paired Differences			t-Value	Sig (2-tailed)
		Translations	Mean	Std Deviation		
1	111	A - B	.29464	.98309	3.172	.002
6	110	A - B	.18919	.82587	2.413	.017
11	111	A - B	.09821	.81605	1.274	.205
2	110	A - B	.31532	1.07011	3.104	.002
7	109	A - B	.18182	1.15084	1.657	.100
12	111	A - B	.27679	1.05872	2.767	.007
3	111	A - B	.28571	.94372	3.204	.002
8	110	A - B	.37838	.85338	4.671	.000
13	111	A - B	.11607	1.25738	.977	.331
4	111	A - B	.49107	1.17017	4.441	.000
9	111	A - B	.57143	1.08814	5.558	.000
14	111	A - B	.34821	.93683	3.934	.000
5	111	A - B	-.12500	1.09975	-1.203	.232
10	111	A - B	.17857	.84057	2.248	.027
15	111	A - B	.24107	1.26096	2.023	.045

Sig. < .05; i.e., values of .05 or more are not significant.

deviation) indicates the extent of deviation of a value from the standard, the 't-Value' is used for deciding whether to reject a null hypothesis and the 'Sig 2-tailed' values help decide whether or not a difference in responses to the two text is significant. This project has adopted Miller et al's 'rule of thumb' for setting the level of significance (*Sig*) at 0.05 (i.e., 5%), which 'means that five times out of every 100 you would find a statistically significant difference even if there was none'. (Miller et al 2002: 118) In other words, we have decided that any value of 0.05 or more is not acceptable for verifying the hypothesis.

Addressing research questions No 1 and No 2 by interpreting quantitative data

The processed statistics does yield evidence for answering research question No 1 affirmatively and research question No 2 negatively. As we can see from Table 2, the *Sig* value of the paired differences between responses to the two texts was less than the *Sig* level adopted for the present investigation (0.05, i.e., 5%) in relation to 11 statements and exceeded the *Sig* level in relation to only 4 statements – I have boldfaced the four 'insignificant' *Sig* values in the table for the convenience of my readers. This evidence is saying that, much more often than not, the respondents think significantly differently about the two texts they were asked to review and assess. The Mean values, which indicate the differences between mean responses to Text A and those to Text B, are positive in 14 instances and negative only in one instance (i.e., in relation to Statement No 5). Even this singular instance of negative value is not significant as its *Sig* value is above 0.05 (5%). As Text A is the Xinhua News Agency translation and Text B is the 'correct' version endorsed by TAC, the evidence points to a favourable reception of the 'faulty' 'journalistic' translation. Surprise, Surprise! This is the biggest surprise produced by the present investigation.

To reiterate, the two texts were seen as significantly different from each other and, where they were so seen, the 'journalistic' one was seen as superior and more preferable. Politically, its author was thought of as a greater political leader and a better manager of a country. On the ground of cultural charisma, s/he was seen as better educated and more highly cultivated culturally. The text itself was judged to have been authored by a more honest politician and to have spoken more of the truth of its author. And compared to the alternative, it was more fascinating and its messages were more memorable. Perhaps more

importantly, in terms of personal preference (as solicited by Statements No 4, No 9 and No 14, all of which begin with the 1st person pronoun 'I...'), where the difference between responses to the two translations looked absolute with *Sig* values invariably being 0.00, the respondents' attitude was unmistakably tilted towards the 'journalistic' version. They were absolutely more likely to 'have the author as a national leader of my country', to 'enjoy reading the text' and to 'take the text seriously'.

What do the instances where responses to four of the statements were not significantly distinguishable say? According to the data available, the two texts appeared rather comparable in terms of being 'easy to understand', 'effective for discouraging wrongdoings', authored by persons of 'great artistic talent' and authored by leaders of 'a great country'. Two important clarifications must be stated here. Firstly, there is only evidence available for pointing to the comparability of the responses to the statements and there is no evidence for claiming that the respondents agreed that either of or both of the texts were this or that or were authored by people of such and such a quality. Secondly there was not a single instance in which the 'correct' text was perceived as superior to the 'journalistic' text.

Why didn't the respondents react discriminately to the two texts in terms of the four statements as they did to the other eleven statements? I cannot completely explain this 'aberrance' but believe I have explanations to two of the instances. In relation to Statement 5, the use of more lengthy, erudite and studious language did not make the 'correct' text more inaccessible (or accessible) because the seemingly difficult language was merely rhetorical, including repetition and symmetry which did not advance the depth of messages and which skilled readers may simply choose to skip in reading. In relation to Statement 11, in the judgement of the respondents as in commonsense, whether a national leader was a great author or not (or whether s/he has authored this text or that text) was not necessarily correlative or proportional to how great his/her country is.

Addressing research question No 3 by interpreting qualitative data

Of the 113 respondents, 64 took part in the qualitative investigation after they completed the quantitative questionnaire, in which they were asked to

voluntarily offer up to three comments on either or both of the texts they had just evaluated. A total of 144 comments were offered, which were then transcribed, collated and categorized. The outcome, which will be discussed shortly, addressed and shed light on what considerations may have been responsible for motivating the respondents to react to the texts the way they did.

Before I discuss the findings, however, I need to caution that they may cause discomfort in some of my readers, especially readers from Mainland China, of which Hu Jintao was the supreme leader until very recently. We need to remember that the investigation involves largely Australians plus a minority of other non-Chinese nationalities reviewing and evaluating English translations of a text authored by a Chinese leader. Therefore, as can be expected, political, social and cultural factors (e.g., ideologies and educations) would have shaped and coloured the process and, consequently, critical and harsh-looking comments would have been made. We can imagine that, should Chinese be invited to comment on writings by an Australian politician, some would be as quick to use critical words like capitalist (the word itself carrying a natural-looking critical connotation), greedy, individualist, selfish, decadent, aggressive and shameless. Understandably, Australians, many of whom are cynical even about their own politicians, would react in a similar way when looking at writings by foreign politicians, not only Chinese politicians but also American politicians. This was indeed the case with the present qualitative investigation where over 90% of the voluntarily tendered comments were critical or were meant to be more critical than positive. In particular, the critical responses must not be interpreted as anti-Chinese because the respondents were not told the source of the texts. In fact, one of the respondents actually suspected that 'George Bush must have authored Text B to impose his black and white morality onto the people' while 'Dalai Lama must have authored Text A' – apparently she disliked the American politician while finding a spiritual leader comparatively more acceptable.

Qualitative comments

The critical comments usually targeted the messages/themes (i.e., what a text was all about), intended purposes/functions (i.e., what a text/author aims to do) and language (i.e., how a text constructs messages and articulates

purposes) of the two texts. Next I will discuss the criticisms in the three aspects respectively. Readers of this paper will notice that while the respondents apparently disapprove both texts, the most critical remarks were saved for the 'correct' version. This bias was reflected in the apparently greater amount of reference made to and quotations made from the 'correct' text in the upcoming discussions.

Firstly the themes and messages of the two texts were badly received by the respondents. While they appeared to be anything ranging from 'hysterical', 'unthinkable', 'narrow-minded', 'dark' to 'medieval' to individual respondents, they were most often discussed in language containing such keywords as 'dictatorial', 'repressive', 'fundamentalist', 'authoritarian', 'totalitarian' and even 'fascist'. With regard to Text A, several respondents found it too authoritarian, confronting and straightforward. One of them compared it to the 'Ten Commandments' because 'like religious leaders, it talks down to us, tells us what to do and what not to do'. Another respondent was 'fearful of the text because it tells me not to do many things but I do all of these.' However, the most critical and harshest comments were reserved for Text B, which several respondents described as being 'totalitarian' and at least four different people used words like 'fascist' and 'nazist' when discussing it. One other respondent asserted that 'Hitler would be proud reading it'. This quotation from one respondent best sums up the general perception about the two texts.

Between the two, I much prefer text A, but it sounds a little like it comes from a dictator, rather than a democratic leader. I am suspicious of patriotic sentiments like these. For text B, my opinion is the same but much stronger, words like 'shame' and 'honour' are a little disturbing to me. It sounds like the army that these shamed might end be punished badly. (sic.)

Next, many respondents were apparently troubled by the intended purposes/functions of the texts. Text A fared a little bit better as the respondents appeared to understand that authorities (e.g., religious or political leaders, teachers) must have been involved in its authorship and that, understandably, they were just doing what they were supposed to do, i.e., giving orders, commandments or lectures. Text B cropped most of the criticisms with regard to what it was intended to do, i.e., honouring phantom people and especially shaming real people. Most of the respondents who criticised the text and who constituted the majority of the participants in the qualitative interviews, noted that Text B was

'negative', 'threatening', 'aggressive', 'blaming' or 'forcing' towards the readers and indicated that they felt threatened when reading it, which left a very bad taste in many of them. I bold-faced **negative** in the preceding sentence because sixteen respondents uttered exactly this word, indicating a common perception. One of them wrote: 'I believe in positive reinforcement, rather than negative reinforcement ("shame"). Another participant said he liked Text A because 'at least it didn't use the phrase "shame on those"'. A third wrote that 'Text B makes you feel like a bad person if you don't do what the author tells you to do but that author is so narrow minded'. Still another noted that 'Text B implies serious consequence' and 'I don't need to be advised on the consequences... I don't feel good when I read it. Again this quotation captures the general mood of the respondents.

I don't like the use of shame in text B, this is not a term I would generally use. It is much too dark and negative. The sentiments of text A are a bit more appealing, they promote the benefits of honest living with integrity and hard work. In many ways they are both promoting the same ideals but with different approaches but text B simply comes across as a more negative approach. (sic.)

Thirdly, the respondents found the language of the two texts very much unacceptable and again the majority of them singled out Text B for criticism. A couple of them did not approve the choice of words used in Text A, including one who pointed out that the text used very rare words like 'fatuity' and 'indolent'. She asked: 'How often do you hear anyone talking to you in those words?' And a few of them did find Text B poetic—and literary—looking just as a few others did with regard to Text A. But the majority of them were not comfortable with the excessive, rhetorical and loaded style of Text B. I quote a number of typical criticisms to indicate the extent of the discomfort. One respondent wondered why it had to use 'so many more words in such tedious and excessive repetition just to shame people'. A second respondent simply dismissed the repetition as 'boring' and 'a waste of readers' time'. Once more, I quote a more complete comment, which reflected the general sentiments of the respondents.

My God! Who would speak like that? The other text became a bit more bearable when compared to this. They said exactly the same thing that made me angry when reading but this one was long, so repetitive and obsessed with

using longer and more complicated words. I wouldn't wish this said to my worst enemies, not even to my horrible treacherous children.

Conclusion

This paper discussed a project that studied the impact of two different translations (a 'journalistic' and a 'correct' one) of a maxim authored by a recent Chinese supreme leader Hu Jintao on 113 native English readers. Comprising two components, a quantitative survey and a qualitative interview, the study was designed to address three research questions, i.e., whether the two translations evoked significantly different responses from the readers, whether the 'correct' translation was received more favourably than the other one and, where there were significant differences and biases towards either, what prompted them.

The quantitative survey, which addressed the first two questions, did identify statistically significant differences in the responses to the two translations in eleven instances and no significant differences in merely four instances. More strikingly, in all the eleven instances of distinguishable responses, there was a clear bias towards the 'journalistic' version and against the 'correct' version. Especially with regards to personal preference (i.e., when responding to three separate statements 'I would like to have the author as a national leader of my country', 'I enjoy reading the text' and 'I take the text seriously'), the bias was absolute. The 'correct' translation was poorly received across other pre-formulated aspects ranging from national leadership, cultural sophistication, credibility and text accessibility and effectivity.

The qualitative survey generated two findings, which served to reveal the considerations underlining the available differences in responses to the two translations and the bias towards the 'journalistic' translation and against the 'correct' translation. The first finding was that, while neither of the translations appealed to the readers as a whole, the 'journalistic' one was comparably more acceptable, in other words, less detestable. The second finding was that, while there were all sorts of complaints about the two texts, the criticisms were much harsher in relation to the 'correct' translation and could be heuristically coded into three groups. Their messages and themes were seen as 'fundamentalist', 'repressive' and 'authoritarian', etc, even 'totalitarian' and 'fascist' in response to the 'correct' translation. Their functions were seen as giving directions and

commandments in the case of the 'journalistic' translation and as 'negatively shaming' in the case of the 'correct' one. The language and the style of the translations were also a pain in the eyes of the readers especially with regard to the 'correct' one because of its use of rhetoric, which made it seem excessively repetitive and wasteful.

In the current age where evidence is the basis of decision making, method selection and action, the findings of the study have great potentials to motivate translators and translation scholars to think twice about the many claims they are fond of making. In the first place, what is claimed to be the 'correct' translation may not look correct (or right) to the readers, especially native language readers. The 'royal', 'official', 'authoritative' translators may have done their leaders a de-service by attempting to translate meticulously the 'literary', 'artistic' and 'cultural' beauty of their leaders' language. By comparison, a 'journalistic' translation like the Xinhua one would have done less damage. Another claim to be rethought critically concerns the overwhelming importance given to such concepts and catchphrases prevailing in translation and translation studies, including 'faithfulness', 'accuracy', 'adequacy' and the like. Again using the translations of 'The Eight Honours and Eight Shames' as an example, a blatantly and purposefully functional translation (i.e., a journalistically oriented translation), as advocated by Reiss (1989), could serve the interest of the Chinese leaders better as its 'massage' of the source text made it less offending to the native readers.

Last but not least, the study discussed in the present paper has contributed to the knowledge generation and regeneration by supplying empirical evidences about impact of translation on readers, which generally complement existing knowledge about texts, authors, translators and translation techniques, which specifically advise Chinese political translators and which lend credibility to functional translation.

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