

## The Role of Evaluative Language in News Translation : Focusing on Soft and Hard News

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### **Abstract**

*In the digital era, news consumption is not confined in geological boundaries. Technological advances bring the instant dissemination of news into life and allow news audience to consume events that occur far away almost in real time. The transmission has blurred the boundary between traditional media and new media, and the one between physical and virtual world. That is, what if a journalist applies news framing to the news translation process? This paper aims to investigate the gap between the ST and the TT created when the source news texts undergo a translation process. To achieve this aim, the appraisal theory developed by White (2003) is employed to identify a difference between the ST and the TT. Furthermore, we have attempted to identify differences between soft news stories and hard news stories while the STs from both news stories are translated into the TTs. Two time-sensitive events, Hugh Grant's marriage and a U.S. and North Korea summit, were selected. The former (a soft news story) is extracted from the Telegraph and the latter (a hard news story) is from the Washington post. As a result, it was found that such strategies as attitude, engagement, and judgment were used when the source news texts from the hard news story are translated into the target news texts. Under the appraisal theory, the strategies involve evaluative language which refers to positive or negative language that judges the worth of entities. In general, it is said that a journalist frames the SS (especially from the hard news story) to convey his ideology to news consumers. Hypothetically, we assume that a similar framing process takes place in deriving the TT from the SS of the hard news story. Thus, we could conclude that the TT from the hard news story differs from the TT from the soft news story and that the difference can be explained within the framework of White's appraisal theory.*

**Keywords:** *soft news, hard news, evaluative language, news translation, appraisal theory.*

### **1. Introduction**

Information flows in different ways through generations. In the digital age, a main medium to disseminate information is a wired or wireless device (Yang & Lee, 2018, Han, 2018). Now we can consume a news story in distant countries almost at the same time. We can watch live news in real time without latency due to the technological advancement. It has been said that the next generation technology 5G speeds up the integration between physical world and virtual world and even provides realistic experiences to anyone in the world (Park, 2017). However, even though we can get news information in real time, a language barrier keeps news consumers from understanding news contents. It means that news translation would not disappear and even become more necessary as the world becomes closer. Especially, news translation should be provided to the people living in the mono-lingual community. Some might say that we don't need to rely on

newspapers because we have a translation program to translate a text in one language (a source text) into a text in the other language (a target text). However, it is questionable whether translated news texts are reliable and trustable. It is reasonable to question whether there might be linguistic changes from a source text to a target text. Even, a semantic change in the translated news texts would be inevitable if a journalist translates a source news text in his favor purposefully. In news journalism, it is often said that journalists frame news stories by emitting, highlighting, elaborating the original news content to convey their ideologies to news readers with an aim to make a certain part in news contexts salient. This seems to hold true in news translation. Bell (1991) and van Dijk (1998) mention that journalists frame news stories by selecting and changing the content of the source texts when the source news texts are translated into the target news texts.

This paper aims to investigate how a source text is translated into a target text in terms of linguistic expressions. A particular attention is paid to the distinction between hard news stories and soft news stories. It has been said that soft news stories are more emotional, rhetoric and use more metaphors than hard news stories. Thus, we have selected one event from each type and compared a source text with its target text towards to the event in terms of linguistic expressions. For the analysis, the event of a U.S and North Korea summit was chosen as a hard news story topic because the event gets worldwide attention around the world to the extent that most quality newspapers have reported the issue, setting aside the fact that the summit between two countries is itself an important indicator to gauge the peace in the Korean peninsula. For a soft news story, the marriage of Hugh Grant, a well-known actor, was chosen in that marriage is a typical soft news topic. There is no particular limitation in the selection of newspapers in this paper. This is because the main aim of this study is not the comparison between newspapers in terms of ideology, but the comparison between news types. For example, the comparison between newspapers would be unavoidable if a political ideology itself is a key issue because newspapers have their own ideological stances towards controversial or political issues. Thus, it is noteworthy to mention that we do not focus on the effect of ideological stances toward the summit. Given this, this study adopts some strategies from Martin (2003)'s appraisal theory and analyze how source news texts are translated into target news texts.

## **2. Soft and Hard news stories**

News text can be divided into two in terms of characteristics of events: hard news and soft news. Hard news is the news of the day, which emphasizes immediacy, and mainly covers military affairs, disaster, government announcements, crimes, house fires, government actions, accidents and international events. Which are often considered "real news," Soft news, on the contrary, is not necessarily time-sensitive. It focuses on a certain angle and gives an in-depth report, which often includes sports, celebrities, anecdotes, science, and technology. They are based on people, ongoing activities or situations, leading news consumers to help to understand people, everyday lives or situations better. It is often said that a good "soft" news stories (feature stories) draws news consumers in emotionally and give them toughing moments. Soft news might be a story about a school program, a profile of a notable person or organization, or a human interest piece. Comparing this with hard news, both types of news give local insight into a social issue, but it is more relevant to news readers' lives than a hard news story. In general a hard news story contains the information of 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when', and 'why' in the first paragraph, whereas a soft news story can begin with a paragraph crafted to hook the reader and draw him in. Even the first paragraph of a soft news story can begin with more literary poetic emotional expressions or use metaphors to draw news readers' attention in, describing who is doing what, the forces that drive them, and how the situation feels, sounds. Let us take a look at hard news stories.

- (1) North Korea has threatened to abandon planned talks between leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump in June if Washington insists on pushing it "into a corner" on nuclear disarmament (May, 2018, taken from CNN).
- (2) Ten people were killed and fifteen injured when a student opened fire at his Texas high school on Friday, officials said, in the latest deadly school shooting in the United States (May, 18, 2018, taken from Washington Post).
- (3) Trump on Thursday pressed ahead with the imposition of 25 percent tariffs on steel imports and a 10 percent tariffs on aluminum on Thursday, though he announced exemptions f

or Canada and Mexico, and said exceptions could also be made for other allies (Marh,8, 2018, taken from CNBC).

Each of the news excerpts informs news audience of different events, namely denuclearization, gun firing and U.S. protective measures to its allies in trade. They are typical examples of hard news stories. They are time-sensitive and inform essential information of news audience in a direct and straight way. We can easily find the information related with 'who,' 'what,' 'why,' 'where,' 'how,' and 'why' in the paragraph. For example, North Korea is an agent (who) of the event of threatening to abandon planned talks between Trump and Kim Jong Un (what), and North Korea showed the intension of scraping the planned talks because of Donald Trump's aggressive behavior of pushing (why). The example of (2) delivered the information of who (*ten people and fifteen people*), what (*being killed and injured*), why (*a student's opening fire*), and where (*Texas high school*), and when (*Friday*). Next, let us look at the examples of soft news stories.

- (4) Bill Gates has quietly and efficiently been donating his fortune since the early 90s but the Microsoft founder has outdone himself by making his largest donation to charity in seventeen years. (August, 15, 2017, taken from Huffpost)
- (5) Hugh Grant once said he was "not a massive believer in marriage," an institution he felt was "unromantic" because humans were not meant to be in long, faithful relationships. But the 57-year-old actor, who was propelled to stardom playing a character who famously left his bride at the altar in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, finally bit the bullet on Friday when he wed his Swedish girlfriend, Anna Eberstein, 39 (May, 25, 2018, The Telegraph).

The above excerpts are typical examples of soft news stories. The modifier *quietly* in (4) touches readers' emotion, leading them to assume that Bill Gates doesn't show off his acts in public, and thus making us believe that he is a true donator. Likewise, the modifier *efficiently* in (4) implies that his donation works in a useful way, for example, helping people who are in urgent need. This holds true in (5). The first paragraph begins with Hugh Grant's words which reveal that he didn't have an intension to get married, which is a strategy to give a twist in the next stage because, reversing his past belief, he recently got married with his longtime girlfriend. In particular, the words *missive*, *faithful*, *famously*, and *propelled to* are not necessarily present in reporting facts but helps to understand a situation better, all of which are typical in soft news stories.

### 3. Framing : Appraisal Theory and Quotations

News framing developed by McCombs's agenda setting theory is a well-recognized theory in journalism. It begins with the assumption that news is not neutral, but subjective. This laid groundwork for the emergence of framing, as a model for 'understanding the media's role in political life' (Reese, 2001). Gamson argued that a news frame is a basic idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue" (Gamson, 1989). Similarly, Entman (1988) emphasized that framing was to select some aspects of an event and made them more salient in news text.

News framing can be done in many ways-selection, omitting, expanding, reducing, exaggerating, and others, all of which helps a certain aspect to be salient, thus driving news consumers to believe that the highlighted part is an integral part in understanding the given news text. In this sense, we assume that quotations and evaluative linguistic expressions can be strategies for news framing in that both involve changes in interpretation of original (source) news texts. First, quotations increases authority and credibility (van Dijk, 1988). It indicates that by using quotations, a reporter can deliver his stance, retaining the 'authorship' but avoiding 'responsibility for what is said. That is, quotations give credibility to the reporting, to give preference to the story, and to deliver different views of the events to readers (van Dijk, 1998; Fiarclough, 1995; Reese, 2001; Jullian, 2011, Noh & Ban, 2014). In this paper, the foreign newspaper is a news course and the linguistic expressions used in quoted texts are analyzed in terms of the appraisal framework (Martin, 2003).

The appraisal theory by Martin (2003) explains whether texts convey positive, neutral or negative assessment in terms of attitude, graduation, and engagement. That is, it attempts to analyze how a speaker or a writer value people, things, and event in the text. Attitude encompasses various options for expression

positive or negative evaluation. Engagement deals with options for the degree of endorsing the statement of others. Graduation refers to the evaluation of attitude and engagement in terms of strength. Now look at the following examples.

- (6) a. The man is kind, generous, and wise in this group
- b. She is silent and reserved.
- (7) a. He asserts/claims/stresses that the evidence is false.
- (8) a. The unemployment rate rise at a very slow pace.
- b. He is *extremely* happy.

In the example (6a), the modifiers, *kind*, *generous*, and *wise*, show that the speaker or the writer has positive attitude to the entity (here, *the man*). The example (b) expresses the attitude to the explicit acts (being *silent* and being *reserved*). In the example (7), the verbs, *asserts*, *claims*, *stresses* indicate that the writer or speaker strongly believe his statement that the evidence is false in that in comparison with the verbs, *mention*, *state*, *say*, those verbs give a clearer endorsement to his statement that the evidence is false. The example (8) shows how the speaker or the writer looks at the unemployment by using a degree adverb, *very*. (8b) shows that the adverb *extremely* can function as a degree adverb. Furthermore, attitude is subdivided into three groups: affect, judgement and appreciation. Affect refers to emotional evaluation of entities ( things, processes or states) as in the statement that he *likes* or *dislikes* ice cream. Judgement involves ethical evaluation of human acts as in the statement that the behavior is *bad*. Appreciation engages aesthetic or functional evaluation of entities (things, process, or states) as in the statement that the flower is *beautiful* or as in the statement that the product is *useless*.

#### 4. Analysis and Finding

Thousands upon thousands of news events take place every day. The news stories are broadly divided into two types: soft news and hard news. The aim of this paper is to look at the similarities and differences between the source news texts and the target news text with respect to two selected hard news and soft news stories based on the appraisal theory framework (White, 2003). In particular, we will pick out one news story appropriate for each news type and analyze it qualitatively. To minimize controversy, a typical topic for each news type was chosen: a U.S and North summit as a case for a hard news story, and marriage of a famous actor, Hugh Grant as a case for a soft news story.

Historically, there has been no diplomatic relation between America and North Korea. Even North Korea has threatened the world with nuclear weapons after withdrawing Non-Proliferation Treaty a long time ago. Since Donald Trump took office, the relationship between two countries has become worse. However, the new administration in South Korea had recently made a dramatic change in the relation between South Korea and North Korea, and probably between U.S. and North Korea. President Moon, who has insisted on the sovereignty on the Korean peninsula has mentioned that our Koreans have to take a leading role on maintaining peace on the Korean peninsula, and has willingly took on the intermediate role between America and North Korea. Thus, following the South and North summit on April, 27, 2018, the two leaders from U.S and North Korea are scheduled to have a summit on June 12, 2018 in Singapore. However, on May 15, Donald Trump announced that he cancelled the summit due to disagreement between two countries towards abandoning nuclear weapons. The following is from one editorial (“ North Korea summit nixed, Trump's diplomacy flops”) from the Washington Post (WP).

- (9) It's hard to imagine that lower-level diplomats can resume discussions if the president has thrown in the towel on diplomacy. Trump will no doubt begin banging the drums of war again, enjoying the credit from right-wingers who yesterday were praising him for dropping his bellicose tone (May, 25, 2018, WP).

The same source text has been cited frequently as a reliable source in domestic news magazines. Such news media as Yonhap news, SBS broadcasting, and Newsis have reported the message with little or no textual changes. However, it was found that there was a textual change in News Pim, as shown in (10).

- (10) Washington post asserted that there is no doubt that Donald Trumps will no doubt begin banging the drum of war in an editorial (May, 25, News Pim)

In comparing (9) and (10), we could find that the verb *asserted* is added in the target news text. Here we need to give a particular attention to some selected lexicons. That is, instead of using the verbs, *say*, *mention*, *state*, why is the verb *assert* used? Assertion is used when an entity strongly convinces a speaker. If this holds true, it might be that a news journalist wants to deliver his viewpoint that the cancellation of the summit would trigger a war to news consumers. Following the appraisal framework, we could say that the engagement strategy is involved in the translation process. Also, looking at the final statement that right-wingers gave applause to Trump for using no bellicose tone, we could easily assume that Trump uses the word *war* as rhetoric, as used in a chicken game. Even, the news text following (10) is not part of the source news text, as shown in the comparison between (11) and (12). (11) is from the translated text in News Pim, whereas (12) is the source text which follows (9) right after. That is, there are no corresponding texts between (11) and (12).

- (11) In fact, after the cancellation, President Trump emphasized that we are ready to mobilize military if North Korea begins a foolish act in the meeting with journalists at the White House. (May, 25, 2018, News Pim).
- (12) However, threats without action quickly diminish our credibility. Nevertheless, in this instance, military action would no doubt entail a massive operation with huge casualties and property destruction. While Bolton and Trump may consider this a viable option, sober members of Congress and the country at-large show no enthusiasm for a replay of the first Korean War. In short, Trump's impulsive actions and the subsequent failure of his summitry amply demonstrate the limitations of a president who operates from the "gut" with virtually *no understanding* of the complex issues involved. Rather than win a Nobel Peace Prize, he once again has proved himself to be clownish and incompetent. (May, 25, 2018, the WP)

The source text (12) clearly blames Trump for his reckless and unwise behavior. The lexicons, *impulsive*, *clownish* and *incompetent* denote negative stances in terms of attitude within the appraisal framework. So, it becomes much clearer that the columnist strongly asks Trump to be prudent and sincere with regard to the summit with North Korea. It was also found that the translated news text (11) was originally following the source text (13) which was part of another news editorial ("NK says it's still willing to talk with US") printed on the same day.

- (13) Mr. Trump blurted at a White House appearance that "it's possible" the summit could still take place on the planned date of June 12, while simultaneously warning that "our military ... is ready if necessary." (May, 25, 2018, the WP).
- (14) In fact, after the cancellation, President Trump emphasized that they were ready to mobilize military if North Korea begins a foolish act, in the meeting with journalists at the White House. (May, 25, 2018, News Pim).

(11) is repeated here as (14). The comparison between (11) and (14) demonstrates that a new phrase *foolish act* is added in the translated news text. It is possible to change the verb *warn* with the verb *emphasize* with no meaningful change. However, the addition of the phrase *a foolish act* leads to induce a biased viewpoint in that the word *foolish* is categorized into the one under the judgement strategy within the appraisal framework. The word *foolish* does not denote ethics but implies that there might be sufficient reasonable ground to be treated in that way. Thus, the cases of (10) and (14) shows that the journalist responsible for the news article conveys his perspective to news consumers.

Now let us look at a soft news story. As mentioned above, Hugh Grant, who is a famous actor starring in popular movies, recently got married. His marriage surprised news readers because he keeps saying that he does not like marriage, as shown in (15). That is, it was a surprising twist. The following is the news except from the Telegraph (May, 26, 2018)

- (15) Hugh Grant once said he was 'not a massive believer in marriage,' an institution he felt

'unromantic because humans because humans were not meant to be in long, faithful relationship. But the 57-year-old actor finally bit the bullet on Friday when he wed his Swedish friend, Anna Eberstein, 39. In 2012, Grant said he was "not a massive believer in marriage." In August 2016, Grant claimed the secret to a happy marriage was having affairs. "Do I think human beings are meant to be in 40-year-long monogamous, faithful relationships? No," Grant told US radio host Howard Stern. "Whoever said they were?"

(15) is the source news text printed in the Telegraph. Here the translated target text is not provided because there is no or little textual change between the source text and the target text except for the underlined words, *long*, *40-year-long*, and *faithful*. However, it seems that the omitted are contextually less important because they are somewhat redundant with regard to the given whole texts. Thus, we assume that it would be reasonable to say that there is no or little textual changes between the source news text and the target news text with regard to the given soft news story.

## 5. Conclusion

The target news text (TT) derived from the source news text (ST) gives credibility and reliability to news consumers. It means the translated news text, called the target news texts (TT) functions as a reliable source. However, this is possible only when the SS is from quality newspapers and news information is translated in a right way. This motivates us to investigate and analyze the translated news texts. In general, in the translation process, the source news text might undergo some textual changes with various reasons such as cultural divergence, different text conventions, and others. However, what if journalists change the source news texts purposefully? It implies that a strategy called news framing is applied in the translation process. That is, what if a journalist frames source news texts to make certain aspects of news to be salient? In general, it is said that news framing is involved in writing hard news stories because the stories are closely related with ideologies, thus driving journalists to add their viewpoints in news writing. Then, it is reasonable to doubt whether the news framing strategy is applied in translating the source news texts of hard news stories. This is a main motive for us to divide news stories into soft and hard news stories in this paper.

This paper investigate the similarities and differences between the ST and the TT with respect to two selected news stories-one soft news story and one hard news story based on the appraisal theory. We have applied a qualitative approach in the analysis because each linguistic expression is a key issue in the analysis. In particular, we have focused on evaluative linguistic expressions because ideological conveyance has a tendency to involve evaluative words or phrases which carry what Martin (2003) calls attitude, engagement and judgment. Time-sensitive issues such as Hugh Grant's marriage and a U.S and North Korea summit were chosen. The news story of Hugh Grant's marriage was selected as a soft news story and that of a U.S. and North Korea summit was as a hard news story. Following the analysis, it was found that in deriving the target news texts from the hard news story, some strategies- attitude, judgement and engagement were employed, whereas there was little or no strategy used in translating the source text from the given soft news story. This is in line with our assumption that hard news stories might undergo textual changes more often than soft news stories in the translation process in that the former involves ideological or biased viewpoints than the latter. That is, just as a journalist frames news content in writing a hard news story to convey their ideology to news consumers, a similar news framing strategy is also applied in deriving the TT from the ST as long as hard news stories are concerned. We hope that this case study would shed light on the understanding of translated news texts better.

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