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Newsweek discourses on China and their Korean translations: A corpus-based approach



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ABSTRACT

Employing a corpus-based methodology and drawing on critical discourse analysis, this study examines news stories about China published in *Newsweek* and the Korean translations of these stories in *Newsweek Hangukpan*, the Korean-language version of *Newsweek*. In so doing, it aims to identify the manner in which China is constructed in the articles selected to be translated for *Newsweek Hangukpan* and to examine any discursive shifts in the Korean translations. The corpus for this study consists of two separate sub-corpora, designed and compiled using the same criteria and specifications: one sub-corpus consists of English-language texts published in *Newsweek* from 2005 to 2015, and the other sub-corpus consists of their corresponding Korean-language translations published in *Newsweek Hangukpan* during the same period. Since news texts produced outstrip the translations, the selection process is largely inevitable and only certain texts are selected for translation; and the socio-political principles or slants of particular news outlets affect which texts are so selected. In this context, the analysis reveals that *Newsweek Hangukpan* emphasises issues that are directly related to South Korea by prioritising, translating, and highlighting these materials, among other news available for translation; simultaneously, it distances itself from certain views advanced in the English source text by reconstructing the voice from its own perspective and using subtle linguistic changes whenever an argument cannot be applied to the South Korean context, such as by downgrading the marked voices in the Korean translations.

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1. Introduction

In July 2014, Xi Jinping, China's president¹, visited the South Korean President, Park Geun-Hye. The visit spoke volumes regarding the close diplomatic relationship that had developed between China and South Korea, as it was the first time that a Chinese leader had visited South Korea without having first visited North Korea. The diplomatic ties between the two countries began to develop in 1992, and their strategic and cooperative partnership has grown since that time. This tie has become even stronger under President Park's South Korean government. In September 2015, Park was one of the highest profile dignitaries seated on the podium in Tiananmen Square during China's celebration of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II (despite American "pressure on her not to go"), which was "seen as a diplomatic 'win' for China (particularly given the perception that the United States opposed it" (Tiezzi, 2015). Meanwhile, China and the U.S. have

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¹ Throughout this article, the term 'China' is used to refer to the People's Republic of China.

developed a love-hate relationship over the last century. The Chinese Civil War (1927–1950), the Korean War (1950–1953), and the divisions between the Western Bloc and Eastern Bloc during the Cold War era led to antagonism between the two nations. However, a number of attempts at easing tensions and developing a new relationship have been successful since the 1960s, and these efforts continue into the present.

China frequently appears in the global news media because of (1) the dramatic changes in U.S.–China diplomatic relations, (2) China's political clout as one of the main diplomatic players in East Asia, and (3) China's long history and culture. Given that South Korea has its own concerns and issues related to China within its own geopolitical context, and that South Korea has been a long-time ally of the U.S., it would be helpful to observe the manner in which news texts about China written in the U.S. media are selected to be translated and published in South Korea and the extent to which translation plays a role in re-framing these texts.

Among other news outlets available, *Newsweek* was selected due to its popularity, the availability of the electronic version of the texts on the internet, and the fact that it regularly offers translations of its articles. Founded in 1933, as a weekly news magazine, *Newsweek* offers comprehensive coverage of world

events, including international affairs, business, science and technology, society and arts and entertainment; and is now published both online and mobile, in addition to the printed editions. As of 2015, printed editions are available in English, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Serbian and Spanish. In 2012, its circulation stands over 1,527,619 copies (Pew, 2015).² Interestingly, in South Korea, which is a monolingual, relatively homogeneous society where majority of the population is Korean ethnicity, the circulation of *Newsweek Hangukpan*, the Korean version of *Newsweek*, is relatively high. According to Korean Audit Bureau of Certification – a non-profit circulation auditing organisation which lists Korean newspapers, magazines, and journals – *Newsweek Hangukpan* holds thirty-first position on the circulation figures in 2015 (a total of 21,438 copies, both paid and unpaid).³ However, those news outlets that feature higher on the list also include entertainment magazines and magazines aimed at specific readerships, such as 여성조선 [Woman Chosun], *Campus Cine21*, 내셔널 지오그래픽 한국판 [National Geographic Korea], and 노블레스 [Noblesse], and monthly magazines such as 월간조선 [Monthly Chosun]. These are not selected for inclusion in the corpus because they do not contain any information that is relevant to this study.

There are other news outlets, too, such as *TIME*, *CNN Hangeul News* [CNN Korean News], and *The Economist* that regularly provide Korean translations of original English-language news articles, but *TIME* does not cover international affairs to the extent that *Newsweek* does and only those articles published after 2010 are available online; *The Economist* focuses on economic issues; and the official website of *CNN Hangeul News* discontinued its translation service in 2013. However, as this study involves building a corpus, obtaining electronic texts is an essential process; consequently, the availability and accessibility of the electronic versions of news reporting are vital. As *Newsweek Hangukpan* regularly uploads the Korean translations of its news reports and addresses international issues to a great extent⁴, a vast amount of news resources could be obtained with minimal effort. Other reasons behind the choice of *Newsweek* include (i) the assumption that it ensures accuracy of reporting, as the renowned weekly news magazine having a number of different branches around the world; (ii) and the fact that the translations are produced weekly by one institution using many anonymous, but professional translators, editors and checkers, thereby the magazine's style is reflected 'in' translation but is not the style 'of' a particular translator, which also ensures translators' basic linguistic competence and their highest possible professional standard.

An unmanageable amount of global news is produced today, which means that only certain texts are 'selected' for translation (because all the texts cannot be translated in real-time), and, the socio-political principles or slants of particular news outlets affect which texts are so selected (Kim, 2014). *Newsweek*, one of the most powerful global news agencies, publishes a Korean-language edition called *Newsweek Hangukpan*, in addition to its English versions. *Newsweek Hangukpan* not only publishes translations of original news reports from *Newsweek* but also includes original Korean articles written by Korean reporters and editors. Not all the texts that appear in *Newsweek* are translated and published in *Newsweek Hangukpan*; in fact, only a few articles are selected for translation to be introduced to the target audience. Based on the assumption that the process of translation begins by selecting the texts to be translated, this study examines the manner in which China is described in the source texts (STs), i.e., those texts

originally written in English and published in *Newsweek* and selected for translation into Korean. This study also investigates the extent to which the construction of China in these Korean translations is distinct or deviates from the manner in which China is constructed in the STs.

After a discussion of the corpus-based critical discourse analysis (CDA) research in translation studies, an account of the data and methodology used in this study is offered, after which the collocate list and concordance lines of 'China' are thoroughly examined in the two sets of texts. The analysis scrutinises the significant lexical shifts revealed in the analysis.

2. Theoretical framework and methodology

Understanding the concept of 'discourse' is fundamental in conducting CDA research, but it is highly abstract and there are "so many conflicting and overlapping definitions formulated from various theoretical and disciplinary standpoints" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 3). Fairclough and Wodak (1997a, p. 258) define discourse as "a form of social practice" born out of "a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it"; on a similar note, other scholars, such as Van Leeuwen and Van Dijk stress further the role of discourse in both constructing dominant-dominated relationships and managing social conflict. In this study, discourse is understood as "structured forms of knowledge" (Wodak and Meyer, 2001, p. 6) that materialises in variable stretches of authentic, naturally occurring, everyday language use, and that take context – whether cultural, social, historical and political – in which the interaction occurs into account (Bax, 2011).

While considering language as social practice (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997a) where an imbalance of power can be featured through these language practices, and seeing language as implicated in social injustice; this study will particularly draw on van Dijk's approach to discover how powerful speakers or groups employ certain discursive structures and strategies in order to persuade their audience (van Dijk, 1993); and to interpret the ways in which social power abuse, dominance and inequality are manipulated, legitimised, reproduced, enacted and sometimes resisted, in specific social and political contexts (van Dijk, 1998). This study will also demonstrate how language is used as a form of social control by examining the repeated linguistic behaviour and patterns that eventually lead to the formation of social and cultural structures, since discursive practices, or a set of interrelated social practices, can aggravate unequal power relations between social groups by manipulating and manufacturing consent and social cognition, and also by positioning people in specific ways in relation to a range of issues (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997a).

Translation studies have "benefited considerably from the application of discourse analysis to the study of cross-cultural communication beyond traditional translation/interpreting settings" (Hatim, 2008, p. 89–90). Considering translation as a socio-cultural – and often political – act, CDA helps translation scholars examine the impact of translation, i.e., what is translated and for whom, why it is translated into that particular language, and finally, what discourse the translation contributes to and what type of discourse is constructed by translating it for the target culture. This final point is salient because CDA's explicit aim is to make "the ideological loading of particular ways of using language and the relations of power which underlie them" more visible (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997b). Indeed, CDA and translation studies share the assumption that textual features must be related to the social and ideological contexts of the production and reception of the text (leŕcu-Fairclough, 2008, p. 67–68).

² As *Newsweek* stopped its print edition in December 2012, the number of overall circulation since 2012 is not available at the time of writing. After its acquisition, IBT Media re-launched the printed edition of *Newsweek* on March 2014.

³ <http://www.kabc.or.kr/> [last accessed 17 Nov 2016].

⁴ *Newsweek* articles are easily accessible by means of its website (<http://www.newsweek.com/>) [last accessed 11 November 2015].

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