

Mediating American and South Korean News Discourses about North Korea through Translation: a corpus-based critical discourse analysis

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ABSTRACT

It is widely acknowledged that mass media play a central role in circulating and disseminating ideas. Particularly in this globalised era, it is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the role and impact of news media in shaping public opinion worldwide. During the attacks on New York in September 2001, for instance, *CNN* – the American cable news network – broadcast across the world twenty-four hours, and most of its reports were translated, or interpreted, into other languages, to be aired in other countries in real time. Most people are thus exposed to extensive reporting every day, but they are not necessarily aware that each news institution promotes, or, at least tries to construct, a particular media discourse according to its political or social orientation.

Because of the complexity of mass media discourses, however, it is difficult to demonstrate how the language used participates in constructing and disseminating certain ideologies, or to challenge stereotypes and power relationships. This explains why media, news, political and institutional texts are preferred genres for critical discourse analysts. The extensive body of literature on news media discourses and their impact which draws on critical discourse analysis includes Van Dijk (1988), Fairclough (1995), Al-Hejin (2007), Kim (2008), among many others.

Translation is a major variable that influences the circulation of ideas and ideologies, and translational choices can participate in provoking (or diffusing) political conflict. At the same time, translation may also challenge dominant discourses. Baker (1996: 14) acknowledges the power of translation, arguing that translation and the study of translation have been used as a “weapon in fighting colonialism, sexism, racism, and so on”. And yet, most research on news discourse has so far tended to examine monolingual texts, rather than multilingual texts, including translations, despite the fact that numerous news reports are translated from one language into another on a regular basis. Critical approaches to language study have occasionally been used to investigate translation, in order “to reveal how translation is shaped by ideologies and in this way contributes to the perpetuation or subversion of particular discourses” (Olk 2002: 101), but such studies have remained restricted in scope.

Drawing on corpus-based methodology and critical discourse analysis, this study examines US and South Korean news stories published in mainstream media with a view to identifying specific discursive practices relating to North Korea and how they are mediated in translation. The study attempts to analyze the relationship between textual features and practices specific to each news outlet.

The corpus for this study consists of two separate sub-corpora, designed and compiled according to the same criteria and specifications: one made up of news texts originally written

in English, and the other consisting of translated texts which include English source texts and the target texts translated from English into Korean. The texts are drawn from *Newsweek/Newsweek Hangukpan* and *CNN/CNN Hangeul News*. The analysis carried out in this study reveals some of the linguistic devices and mechanisms by which news outlets generate representations and hence, it is hoped, sensitizes both consumers and media translators to the power of discourse.

KEYWORDS: corpus-based translation studies, critical discourse analysis, news, North Korea, media texts.

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