Features of Mechanical Product Manual and Its Translation Strategies

Mingliang Wang, Zhihui Liu*
College of Foreign Languages, Shandong University of Science and Technology, Qingdao, Shandong, 266590, P. R. China
*Corresponding author’s e-mail: skdwml@126.com

Abstract. Mechanical product manual is a kind of application writing used to introduce the performance, specifications, use and way of maintenance about specific mechanical products. Based on the linguistic adaptation theory, the present paper probes into the research of mechanical product manual translation. The translation of mechanical product manual can offer the target language customers the equivalent product information, publicize the mechanical products, and even attract the potential customers. On this premise, a qualified translator ought to comply with the features of mechanical product manual and adopt the appropriate translation strategies so as to render a high quality translation.

1. Introduction
Nowadays, more and more mechanical products made in China are sold to foreign markets and they are getting recognition from many more foreign consumers. As is required, each product should contain a detailed manual introducing its quality, function and usage so that it can serve consumers to better understand how to use this product and how to prevent from damaging. In addition, the manual with good translation can also bring about a positive image of the manufacturers. Obviously, the product manual has played an important role in the international market. However, in the actual process of translation, some mechanical product manuals are not concise or clear enough, which sometimes even cause some misunderstandings. Therefore, the correct translation of the mechanical product manual is worth analyzing and researching further.

2. Features of mechanical product manual
As a kind of technical text, the mechanical product manual possesses both the general characteristics of technical articles and its unique features as well, which will be analyzed from its lexical, syntactic and discourse level in the following part.

2.1 At lexical level: nouns-dominated
It should be objective for words of mechanical product manual to better contain the useful information, such as fundamental description on product, specifications, technical parameters, etc. For example, Any Thermo King approved replacement part can be used in the performance of any warranty maintenance or repairs on emission control system parts or components, and must be provided without charge to the owner if the part is still under the California emission control system warranty (Zhu Zhide, 2003). From this example, it can be seen that the nouns are in a high percentage. In addition, in this manual, the nouns are always used as attributes, and the nouns used as adjective often
could form long noun phrases.

2.2 At syntactic level: simple & imperative sentences dominated
Since not all readers are professional, in order to be understood easily, the sentences of specification are mostly simple and attributive clauses are rare. In addition, another characteristic of mechanical product manual at syntactic level is that the imperatives are broadly used. Specifically, the imperatives are concise and strong enough to enable readers to understand some authority information. Different from other sentences of introduction, noun structure containing action nouns is not used in the imperatives. What’s more, in order to tell how to use the product, the mechanical product manual should offer some essential description about the usage time, environment, etc..

2.3 At discourse level: present tense & passive voice dominated
The present tense is generally used in mechanical product manuals. It can be used to illustrate the objective truth and keep the content concise. In the respect of voice, the passive voice is often used in mechanical product manuals in order to illustrate all about the product clearly. The product is emphasized directly in the passive voice, and this can enable the readers to better understand functions of the products.

3. Guiding Theory: Linguistic Adaptation Theory
The linguistic adaptation theory, or adaptation theory, was proposed by the Belgian linguist Jef Verschueren in 1999, in his opinion, the use of language is a process in which the language works or language users choose the right way to express the proper meaning. Here, the theory is reflected on a kind of mutual adaptation between the environment and language structure. Jef Verschueren pointed that the language-using process is a continual choice-making process. “Using language must consist of the continuous making of linguistic choices, consciously or unconsciously, for language-internal (i.e. structural) and /or language-external reasons” (Verschueren, 1999). These relative choices could be identified from the following five linguistic levels: from the basic phonetic and morphological levels, to the lexical and syntactic levels, and to the semantic level. In the translation process involving adaptation theory, the translator should consider this dynamic choice-making process with effort. According to Jef Verschueren, in order to understand this dynamic choice-making process, a translator needs to comprehend the three interconnected notions first, the first notion is variability, the second is negotiability, and the third is adaptability, the three of them are supplemented each other. Linguistic adaptation theory plays an important role in guiding translation practice, and meanwhile it provides some useful hints and suggestions from these three perspectives, including adaptation to contexts, structural objects and dynamic adaptation.

4. Translation Strategies for mechanical product manual
Unlike the regular translation, the translation of mechanical product manual involves not only the decoding process, the extra-linguistic factors should also be taken into serious consideration, which sometimes even counts more. From the perspective of adaptation theory, the translating process of mechanical product manual is a continual procedure to make different adaptive choices from different levels of salience for both language internal and external reasons. Therefore, this linguistic adaptation theory can offer translators an integral perspective in their translation process of mechanical product manuals.

4.1 Dynamic adaptation to context
In the translation process of mechanical product manual, the involved contextual correlates of adaptability are far more complicated. Because it is quite uncertain that what main contextual correlates the translator’s linguistic choice ought to adapt to, while translating this kind of mechanical product manual, translators should consider both the elements related to the source language writer and the elements related to the target language writer. As for how the adaptation is conducted, which is
still unidentified, again the translator needs to take into consideration the cultural differences between the source language and target language. Additionally, this dynamic adaptation-making process requires the involvement of the translator’s various elements, including the translator’s mastery degree of the two languages, the translating purposes and the understanding about the two cultures.

Example 1

ST: 当发生电池电量不足警告时，请在利用输入输出设备保存了加工程序、工具数据、参数之后，更换电池。另外，当发出电池报警时，加工作程、刀具数据、参数可能会损坏。在更换电池后，请重新加载各数据。

TT: When the warning of low power occurs, please replace the battery after saving the processing program, tool data, and parameters. In addition, the processing procedures, tool data, parameters may be Damaged when a battery alarm is issued. Please reload all the data after replacing the battery.

Analysis: From this example, it can be seen that in the temporal adverbial clause, the “电池电量不足” is translated into low power only by omitting the word battery, this is because in the main clause, the battery in the phrase replace the battery refers to the same battery, in the process of translation, the translator needs to make the right adaptation, and figure out that the two “电池” refers to the same thing, then the correct choice of proper translation strategy is adopted. Furthermore, in the second sentence, “加工程序、刀具数据、参数可能会损坏” is placed after the adverbial clause in the Chinese version, which conforms to the expressing order of the source language, however, in the target language, the translator needs to put this main clause before the adverbial clause in accordance with the English regular sentence order. The same translation method is applied in the third sentence too. This is a typical example that can exemplify the dynamic process of adaptation to the target language context. First off, the translator’s thinking activity is dynamic, which should make the corresponding adaptation to the source texts according to the various communicative context and the different linguistic context; in the second place, a qualified translator should take the the contextual correlates into serious consideration, such as the TT readers’ expectation. So it can be summarized that, the process of MPM (short form for mechanical product manual) translation is dynamic, the translator should make the right choice and correct adaptation so as to strike a balance both for the ST writer, and for the TT readers as well.

4.2 Dynamic adaptation to pragmatic strategies

As is known to all, one of the important traits of language is its variability, which can offer the language users a great variety of choices. However, the exchange of information is a continually negotiable and constantly dynamic process instead of being static, so in people’s communication process, to achieve various communicative goals, they would resort to different strategies, among which the redundant information method is frequently used. This strategy can serve the pragmatic goals for the translator, as the manufacturers are required to establish a kind of trustful relationship with the target customers, so that the customers can know better about the products. In order to achieve this goals, in the process of MPM translation, the translator needs to make dynamic adaptation to the relative pragmatic strategies.

Example 2

ST: 当将中间的单节设定为运转开始位置，起动程序时，不执行进行了设定的单节之前的程序。如果在进行了设定的单节之前，有坐标系移位指令及 M、S、T、B 指令，则请利用 MDI 等发出必要的指令。如果不进行这些操作就起动所设定的单节，则可能与机械发生干扰。

TT: When setting a single block to start running program, the program before this single block will not be executed. If there is coordinate shift directive and M, S, T, B directive before setting the single block, please issue necessary directive by MDI. If starting the setting single block without these
operations, mechanical interference may happen.

Analysis: In this example, it can be seen that in the TT, this manual is translated in accordance with ST sentence order, the first two sentences of the ST are combined together in the TT translation, because the two sentences express a complete meaning in the TT. From this example, it may be reflected that in the process of MPM translation, the translator is constantly making choices to decide which strategy should be adopted, and this process is continuous until the completion of the whole translation work. It needs to be noted that, in this process, a translator’s comprehensive ability is crucial to the adequate translation of a piece of mechanical product manual, a translator must make the quick decision about what strategy to adopt according to the ST structure. Therefore, the dynamic adaptation to the right pragmatic strategies is a significant skills for a qualified translator.

5. Conclusion
Since the mechanical product manual plays a crucial role in the usage and maintenance of a certain mechanical product, the translation of mechanical product manual is by no means a light task, it requires the translator to participate in this complicated choice-making process in order to convey the indispensable information of the ST manual. In the present paper, Jef Verschueren’s linguistic adaptation theory is applied as the guiding theory to research the translation of mechanical product manual, it proves that this theory can provide a much broader applicability, which can offer a complete guidance for the translation of mechanical product manual from a entirely new perspective, also this theory has vigorous vitality and great applicability in both the mechanical product field and the other science and technology areas.

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