

The Translation Challenges of the Party and Government Publicity Texts from the Perspective of Chinese and Western Political Discourse System Differences Based on *The Governance of China (I) (II) (III)*

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Abstract: With the rising status of China in the world, more and more foreigners are interested to understand contemporary China more comprehensively and objectively. Thus, translation of our party and government publicity texts plays a significant role as a window and a bridge. However, there are some translation challenges due to Chinese and western political discourse system differences. This research aims to find out and classify these challenges and provide some feasible and practical strategies and methods.

Keywords: Translation challenges; Party and government publicity texts; Political discourse system

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1. Introduction

With the increasing status of China in the world, countries around the world are full of curiosity and expectation about China's road and system, and hope to learn from China's miraculous development. In this context, the relevant documents of Chinese party and government have been a new window for the international community to understand China. In addition, these documents are also related to the shaping of China's international image. Several studies have pointed out the specific characteristics of the party and government publicity texts and have suggested some strategies based on constructivism theory of translation. (Ma Tiewei, 2013) And it has been claimed that ideology would affect the translator in many aspects in the process of translation and is crucial to the quality of the translation. (Jia Hui, 2008). However, the previous studies didn't analyze the specific differences between Chinese and Western political discourse systems, and how these differences bring challenges to the translation. To date, there has been no systematic classification of these translation problems or corresponding solution strategies. To further study this subject, this study is going to identify and classify translation challenges of the party and government publicity texts from the perspective of Chi-

nese and western political discourse system differences based on *The Governance of China (I) (II) (III)* and give some feasible and practical methods to cope with these challenges.

The Governance of China contains Xi's speeches, interviews, and messages since he was elected general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee in 2012. This book is not only a way of understanding what China's leadership thinks, but also understanding the Chinese political system, Chinese society and how China relates to the rest of the world. The book addresses a wide range of topics such as socialism with Chinese characteristics, reform and opening up, rule of law, national defense, diplomacy and the fight against corruption. As Xi Jinping said, *The Governance of China* is a must-read for those who want to have a broader and deeper understanding of China. Many believe that ignoring what the president of China says is to be unaware of an essential part of national political life, the Chinese way of thinking, and the Chinese reality.

2. Literature Review

Since the reform and opening up, Chinese government has made great efforts to promote the translation of

materials of foreign publicity. However, in the following decades, China's development speed far exceeded translation's progress. In recent years, general secretary Xi Jinping has been emphasizing to carefully build a political discourse system and enhance the creativity, charisma and credibility of the external discourse. To achieve this goal, translating the party and government publicity texts accurately and attractively is an integral part and Chinese and western political discourse system differences is one of the crucial factors that will affect translation quality.

Jia Hui (2008) put forward that ideology would affect the translator's choice of materials, make the translator try to cater to the reader's mainstream consciousness and accommodate the reader's aesthetic habits. Then, Jia took translation examples from *Newsweek* to show ideology's influence but he didn't provide specific and theoretical methods. Zhu Yihua (2010) put forward the requirements for translators that the translators need to be sensitive and cautious to political topics and terms and have a deep understanding of political words and expressions with Chinese characteristic when translating government texts. From another point of view, these requirements are also methods to improve translation quality of the party and government publicity texts. Ma Tiewei (2013) summarized the basic concepts and characteristics of foreign publicity translation, and put forward 4 general strategies based on constructivism theory of translation, which provides a possible direction for translators to translate better. Bánhegyi Mátyás (2015) provided an overview of the relationship between political discourse(including texts created through translation), power and ideology. The author stressed that translation in bi- and multilingual contexts plays a crucial role in retaining political power and preserving the ideology related to it but didn't analyze much about the politics' influence on translation. Shen Chunli (2015) stressed that translators need to study more political theory. This can be viewed as a complement of Zhu Yihua's idea and together the two's ideas can construct a specific way that the translators should follow when translate relevant materials. Li Qinglan (2017) took *The Key Roles of the CPC in Addressing China's Issues* as a study case, and put forward strategies and solutions to bridge the gap between western readers and the original text in translation of Chinese government and the CPC publicity texts. She stated that to bridge the gap in political cognition, obscure and unfamiliar words should not be used, which can be replaced with an interpretative phrase or a sentence. This is a feasible plan and all these methods and strategies put forward before are all

constructive. However, there is a gap that these methods are not associated with specific type of translation problems and all the methods need to be more theoretical and systematic^[1].

3. Research Methods

(1) Literature research methodology

Previous papers and essays on the topic of the characteristics of foreign publicity materials, the differences between Chinese and American political discourse systems, and the translation of political materials were studied. Then, summary of relevant information and views was made.

(2) Case study, comparison analysis and experiential summary methodology

Participants

40 students and 2 professors in translation majors from universities in Beijing. They are all born and raised in China and take English as their second language.

Materials

The Governance of China (I) (II) (III)

Procedure

First, the 40 students and 2 professors were required to translate a segment of about 400 words from the given text according to their own interests.

Second, their translation works were collected and a discussion was held. During the discussion, 22 students and 2 professors were presented. Those who couldn't join in also sent their translation problems and some advice through the Internet before the discussion. Then, all the translation works collected were presented to all the participants and they evaluated and compared each work. During the process, they were required to share and then write down all the translation problems together brought by Chinese and western political discourse system differences. 4 questions were listed to help them to find and classify the problems: 1. What do you think are the differences between Chinese and Western political discourse system? 2. What are the translation challenges of the party and government publicity texts, especially in the given text, from the perspective of Chinese and Western political discourse system differences? 3. How do political discourse system differences bring translation challenges? 4. What are your strategies and methods to deal with these challenges?

Third, all the participants offered advice on how to overcome these problems and difficulties which included ones of those who didn't show up.

Fourth, the problems and methods were collected

and analyzed. These problems were classified into several groups and the methods were also classified and linked to the problems.

4. Results

Differences and Challenges

(1) Different political concepts, vocabulary and expression. Some conceptions only make sense in China's political discourse. There are no exact corresponding words in English. For example, the unique political concepts and political discourse in China, such as "San Ge Dai Biao", "Wu Wei Yi Ti", and so on. There is little precedent to help to translate, while foreign media translation is not so comprehensive and accurate.

(2) The lack of understanding of the discourse which has cultural background. Among the foreign readers, except for a few who have studied Chinese and Chinese culture, most of them know little about Chinese culture. Therefore, generally, they are not familiar with it, and they cannot understand the rich ideological content contained in the concept and cultural symbols with Chinese characteristics. Therefore, cultural default occurs. Cultural default refers to the omission of relevant cultural background knowledge shared by both sides of communication. It omits the obvious information, but it is still comprehensible and does not cause reading problems. However, in cross-cultural communication, cultural default leads to reading obstacles of target language readers, because they do not have the relevant background cultural knowledge of the source language. (Si Xianzhu, Zeng Xianping, 2021) For example, the Spirit of Lei Feng and the Spirit of Jiao Yulu are a kind of classical cultural symbols for Chinese but can't be understood comprehensively by foreigners unless these terms are explained in a detailed way.

(3) Difficult to show affinity to and attract foreign readers. The first reason is there are many concepts which are concise and reasonable, many allusions used to enrich intertextual interpretation, and frequently-used parallelism to reason with grand momentum in Chinese political discourse. Although these characteristics increase the momentum and literary talent of the article, they also increase the difficulty for readers to understand and get interested in it. The second reason is that the political discourse, ideology, value and stand interact with one another. Because the ideology, ways of thinking, political discourse and aesthetic taste of foreign readers are quite different from those of domestic readers and especially that westerners and Chinese have different values and

stands on politics, it is difficult to show affinity to and attract foreign readers to know more about a real China^[2].

Strategies

(1) The translation of characteristic words should be "me oriented", and the translation of political discourse with Chinese characteristics should be constructed through creating the concept by ourselves. The political discourse with Chinese characteristics has the characteristics of seriousness, strictness, rigor, authority, accuracy and coherence, which can only be explained and explained under its own political standards. We should never use western political discourse system completely merely in order to make foreigners understand us more easily, which may lead to the collapse of our own political concept system. As Hu Anjiang (2020:8) said: "in order to get into the target context and obtain value recognition, the translator's voice and position will inevitably penetrate into the text through language, and the value reconstruction of the target culture will be completed through translation of the text." Therefore, translation should not be attached to the western political discourse system, otherwise it will fall into their discourse trap.

It is a normal thing that in many cases, translation of terms with Chinese characteristics within the politics discourse need translators to create the new English names for many times. Besides, many terms and concepts have different translations at the beginning. For example, "community of shared destiny", "community of common destiny", "share a common destiny", "community of common future" all refer to the same political term. Gradually, "community with (a) shared future" became the official one.

Therefore, translators don't have to worry about creating new terms when there is no precedent. Translators can use literal translation or transliteration with specific explanation. In addition, obscure and unfamiliar words can be replaced with an interpretative phrase or a sentence. For example, "economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological progress" is a better translation than "Wu Wei Yi Ti" for the latter is too obscure while the former one provides a clear meaning and concept. Therefore, this requires translators to learn more about politics and have a deep understanding of political words and expressions with Chinese characteristic.

(2) In order to eliminate the reading obstacles of target language readers, it is necessary to compensate the cultural default in translation, to express the information implied by unique cultural words, and to construct a translation context conducive to the target language readers'

reading and understanding. The semantic compensation is determined by the meaning of cultural words in source language. If the source language culture words are rich in connotation and contain some traditional Chinese cultural concepts and values, they should be fully explained, including their origin and connotation, so that the target language readers can understand the broad and profound Chinese culture. For example, the translation that “four tests, which refers to the tests of exercising governance, carrying out reform and opening up, developing the market economy and responding to external development” is a good sample for it presents a clear and correct connotation of the special term with Chinese characteristics. In this way, foreigner readers can know clearly what the terms really mean.

(3) To attract the foreign readers, translators can weaken political color on the premise of ensuring political accuracy, change the complicated and lengthy sentence patterns in Chinese and use more concise verbs and weakening the part of preaching. Also, it would be beneficial if translators can grasp and command the taste and local trend of target readers. However, this requires translators to be very sensitive and cautious to political topics and terms and have a firm political stance. We want our translation to attract the foreign readers to learn more about real China and enhance China’s international discourse power rather than simply catering to their interests but abandoning our own political discourse. For example, it is a good translation that “Lucid waters and lush mountains are as such mountains of gold and silver”, which is clear and simple while remaining the original meaning^[3].

5. Conclusions

This research aims to analyze how Chinese and western political discourse system differences bring challenges to the translation of the party and government

publicity texts and what the challenges really are and then provide the corresponding strategies.

Besides, it systematically classified the challenges and problems in the translation of the party and government publicity texts, helped the translator understand the types and causes of the problems and provided some methods, which was conducive to improving the efficiency and accuracy and producing a more authentic and higher-quality English translation. In the past, the power of political discourse was in the hands of Western media, and China was in a passive state. After the translation quality is improved, western readers’ interest in reading our party and government publicity texts will be more attracted and it will help us regain the initiative and spread the voice of China on our own. In addition, the world would understand China more comprehensively and we can build a good and authentic image of China in the international arena. However, this research has some limitations that it described the challenges mostly from the perspective of translation students and professors and it didn’t use very scientific tools to help analyze the challenges and strategies. Also, the material used as examples was limited, so was the result. However, it is expected that this research can help translators be more clear about the possible challenges they are going to face when translating the party and government publicity texts and provide them with some practical methods and strategies.

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