

# Cultural Translation Strategies in Xi Jinping: The Governance of China

Wenjing Wang, Shanti C Sandaran, Azizah Rajab, Di Qi, Xiaoxiao Fu

**Abstract:** *As an important part of international publicity translation, political documents translation is the door for the international community to learn about the domestic and foreign policies of China. This paper examined the translation strategies of the Chinese idioms, policies, and guidelines, classical literature from the perspective of cultural translation in the English version of Xi Jinping the Governance of China, to offer some theoretical and practical reference for the translation of political documents. The results of the study indicate that as the content of the source text and the specific goal of translation differ, the translation strategies are diversified. Idiom translation can be a literal translation or free translation, so as to achieve the purpose of information and cultural exchange. Generally, literal translation plus annotation are adapted to interpret the specific contents of China's major policies to foreign readers in a comprehensive and detailed way. The ancient allusions can be translated literally or freely according to the needs of translation, and specific problems should be treated in a specific way. Political document translation is not only the transformation of language systems between the source text and target language but also the transmission of cultural factors behind the source language.*

**Index Terms:** *political documents; cultural translation; international publicity translation.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. The background of the study

In the process of global integration, China is developing rapidly in the fields of politics, economy, culture, and science. For a long time, the path and mode of socialism development with Chinese characteristics have drawn close attention at home and abroad (1-7). Especially in recent years, China has attracted the attention of the whole world by proposing the "Chinese dream" with the goal of comprehending the great transformation of the Chinese nation and calling of the "One Belt and One Road" for international cooperation (8-15).

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**Wenjing Wang**, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Ph.D., wangwenjing20160225@gmail.com

**Shanti C Sandaran**, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Senior Lecturer

**Azizah Rajab**, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Prof

**Di Qi**, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Ph.D.

**Xiaoxiao Fu**, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

(Language Academy, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia)

### B. the Importance of the Study:

Under this context, the political documents released by CPC central committee and the speeches made by Chinese leaders in the new era at home and abroad have become effective windows for further understanding the governance philosophy, development goals and policies of China (16-20).

*The Governance of China* is a work from the president of China including his speeches, talks, and instructions which condensed the thoughts and wisdom on the latest statement of the important political documents, covering the political, economic and social development of China and foreign and domestic policy. The multilingual version of this literature has been released simultaneously for the whole world, which evoked strong repercussions.

What is more, to strengthen the study of translation of this kind of important political document is conducive to a comprehensive and objective understanding of the governance strategy and development philosophy from Chinese leaders of the new generation, as well as the development path and mode of China in the new era, which is closely related to our national image and diplomatic construction. English translation of current political documents is a special form of translation for international publicity and also belongs to the diplomatic language.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW: PERSPECTIVE OF CULTURAL TRANSLATION THEORY

### A. The Development and definition of Cultural Translation Theory

The translation is a process of text conversion in different language systems, along which the cultural factors are supposed to be involved behind the language. The treatment of cultural factors is an indispensable stage for translators to complete the whole translation process. Therefore, it is not only required for translators to understand foreign cultures, but also seize the essence of their own national cultures profoundly.

According to Hall (21), culture is not only the connotation of language but also the ideology perceived and shared by the members living in the same social background. Different cultural backgrounds under different ideologies are also the main reasons for the information asymmetry in the referent and associative meaning in the translation process which may lead to the failure of intercultural communication. Therefore,



cultural factors play a certain role in the success or failure of cross-cultural communication. Translators Bassnett and Lefevere (22) put forward the concept of "cultural transition" in their book *translation, history and culture* in translation studies for the first time. They stressed further that translation activities not only involve the conversion between two languages but also represent the collision and communication between two different cultures, that is, cross-cultural communication.

Under this condition, the translation conducted from the perspective of cultural communication, that is, cultural translation (23). Cultural translation, as the name suggests, involves language, culture, and translation. Therefore, translation studies should focus on the differences not only in language but also in the underlying cultural factors (24).

### B. The purpose of political document translation

The purpose of translating political documents is to convey domestic political views and policies to foreign readers to strengthen cultural publicity and promote effective communication. In the Chinese context, as 黄友义 (25) argued, an effective translation of political documents is a significant way to provide the international community with an understanding of China's national condition, development concept and foreign policies, as well as a predominant mean of publicity for China's further integration into the world stage.

### C. The requirements of political document translation

Political documents refer to the country's major policies, which are related to national image and international diplomacy from the perspective of external publicity. The translation of political documents should follow the basic requirements of "faithfulness", closely following the original ideas, and should not be expanded or deleted at will. It is necessary to have a high sense of political sensitivity and responsibility for the translators in order to obtain a balance between the accuracy of cultural communication and the flexibility of language expression avoiding making political mistakes (26).

### D. The principles of political document translation

In order to allow complete play to the vocative function of political documents and achieve the purpose of political propaganda, Chinese experts on political document translation 黄友义 (25) put forward the important three principles of "close to diplomatic publicity", that is, close to the actual development of China, close to the foreign readers' demands for Chinese information, and close to the thinking patterns of foreign readers, which has laid the theoretical basis for the translation cause of Chinese political documents.

## III. METHODOLOGY

As the study aims to identify the translation strategies of those specific expressions from the viewpoint of cultural interpretation. In accordance with the aim of the study, the qualitative research method is supposed to be applied to

identify certain translation strategies that aim to provide readers with an initial understanding of the translation method utilized in the Xi's works.

### A. Data collection

Cultural translation is to explore and analyze the application of translation strategies and the translation thinking patterns reflected in translation texts from the perspective of culture, it is from this particular perspective that the present study takes *Xi Jinping the Governance of China* (volumes 1 and 2) and its English version as the research materials to examine the common strategies for the English translation of political documents.

### B. Focus on the expressions with Chinese attributes

#### 1) The definition of the expressions with Chinese attributes

*Xi Jinping the Governance of China* is an important political document to display the latest statecraft of the party and state leader, among which the terminologies with Chinese attributes which signifies the manifestations of a unique way of Chinese thoughts and phenomenon emerged during the development of the society are particularly rich (27).

#### 2) The classification of the representations with Chinese attributes

Under the dialectal and cultural variances between Chinese and English, different forms of the expressions with Chinese features emerged as followed: the expressions of idioms, the expressions of number-abbreviated policies and the expressions of classical literature, which was based on the study of Xu and Hua (27), and there are four main types of expressions with Chinese attributes in his study including shorten-formed expressions, neologisms, culture-loaded manifestations, and the three-person or four-person expressions. Therefore, the next part is supposed to focus on the analysis of translation strategies used in expressions with Chinese characteristics.

## IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### A. Idiom translation with Chinese cultural characteristics

Idioms are generally displayed in the form of phrase which is a special language phenomenon extracted from long-term language practice and it can be regarded as the core and the essence of the language (28). The language image of the idiom is vivid and the structure is clear and concise with distinctive national and cultural characteristics. In spite of the differences in languages and cultures of various nations in the world, there are also similarities, which is the common foundation of human civilization and the prerequisite for translation between different languages and cultures (29). The literal translation is the best strategy when the referential object and associative meaning of the source text are consistent with that of the target language. The application of this translation strategy can be



seen from the idiom examples cited by general secretary Xi Jinping in his speech as followed:

[Example 1]:

Source Text: 因此，在中国当领导人，必须在把情况搞清楚的基础上，统筹兼顾、综合平衡，突出重点，带动全局，有时候要抓大放小、以大兼小，有的时候又要以小带大、小中见大，形象地说，就是要“十个指头弹钢琴”。(30)

English Version: As a Chinese leader, I must take all aspects into regard built on a proper knowledge of China's situations, retain an total equilibrium, and focus on urgencies to elevate the whole state of affairs. I vary my consideration among main and small issues, and, to put it symbolically, **it is like playing the piano with all ten fingers** (31).

The idiom of “十个指头弹钢琴” was literally translated into "It is like playing the piano with all ten fingers". The piano is a western musical instrument, which the English readers are familiar with. Moreover, it has the same referential object in both English and Chinese language system, and its associative meaning is totally identical. Therefore, the literal translation of the above idiom not only vividly expresses its meaning, but also spreads the culture of our country to English readers, and conveys the governance philosophy of our party under the coordination of multiple aspects and overall development.

[Example 2]:

Source Text: 这不仅是行政长官和香港特别行政区政府的责任，也是香港各界人士共同努力的结果。众人拾柴火焰高 (30)

English Version: It is not only a liability of the chief executive and the HKSAR government, but a task be dependent on on the collaborative endeavors of individuals of all professions in Hong Kong. **When everyone includes wood to the fire, the fires soar high** (31).

The essence of the idiom of “众人拾柴火焰高” was saying "unity is a strength" which conveys the political notion that only by uniting the broad masses of the people can we create a brighter future for Hong Kong. The literal translation is adopted to illustrate this simple truth through an adverbial clause with “when” in English with clear and concise structure, which is also in line with the reading habits of English readers.

[Example 3]:

Source Text: 很多县远离中心城市，容易让人有“山高皇帝远”的念头，上级监督鞭长莫及。在这样的环境下工作，如果没有对党忠诚作政治上的“定海神针”，就很可能在各种考验面前败下阵来。(32)

English Version: In many counties far away from the center, when higher-level supervision is distant, **Party secretaries tend to have the final say**. For those working in remote areas, without loyalty to the Party **as an anchor of**

**faith** there is a real danger that they fail one of the above-mentioned tests. (Xi 2017)

The first idiom belongs to the part of traditional Chinese history, among which “皇帝” means “the emperor” in the history of China, and literal translation of the idiom was “the sky is broader when the emperor is far away”. The literal translation of “定海神针” is a giant needle with magic power to calm the sea. It comes from *Journey to the West*, one of China's four classical novels in which it refers to the weapon equipped by the Monkey King. The content of both idioms stems from exclusively Chinese history and culture. However, in the context of English language and culture, there is no corresponding referent, in the absence of the background knowledge of relevant literature as input, it is hard to understand the meaning for foreign readers. Therefore, for the sake of understanding by target readers, translator adopted domestication translation process, respectively made a free translation of the "Party secretaries tend to have the final say" to warn those local officials who were arrogant and "an anchor of faith" to emphasize the loyalty to the Party for the local officials to attain the objective of publicity and bridge the culture gap to fulfill cross-cultural communication.

Therefore, idioms in political documents with Chinese national characteristics should be translated in different ways according to the language nature of idioms (33). When the source language and the target language share the same referential object and associative meaning, literal translation not only can retain the language style of the source text but also can disseminate the corresponding information to the target readers and display the cultural characteristics of the source language.

## B. The translation of number-abbreviated policy and guidelines

In the second volume of *Xi Jinping the Governance of China*, there are many political terms such as policy measures, development goals, and governance concepts. According to statistics, there are 270 annotations of these technical political terms in the Chinese version and 255 annotations in the English version (34). Most political terms, especially such as "two one hundred", "four" the number of such kind of abbreviations, the source text readers, still need to read the comments to understand the implication, unfamiliar with foreign policy, China's internal affairs English readers, their understanding of these political terms can be said to be a blank. (35) pointed out that the translation purpose of political literature is to let the target language readers receive the source text information accurately, so as to achieve the purpose of external propaganda. Annotation, as the most important way of information supplement in translation, is an indispensable translation strategy for cross-cultural communication (36). Therefore, for the translation of these professional political terms, it is appropriate to adopt literal translation and annotation

[Example 4]:



Source Text: 中国坚持独立自主的和平外交政策，在和平共处五项原则的基础上同所有国家发展友好合作。(32)

English Version: China is dedicated to an autonomous extraneous policy of goodwill and fostering sociable collaboration with all other nations on the foundation of **the Five Tenets of Peaceful Existence**. (Xi 2017)

Notes: "The Five Tenets of Peaceful Existence" refers to joint reverence for each other's regional integrity and autonomy, shared non-aggression, shared non-interference in each other's transnational affairs, impartiality and collaboration for mutual value, and peaceful existence.

The policy of "和平共处五项原则" was literally translated into "The five principles of Peaceful Coexistence" is the basic principles for China to deal with foreign relations and international issues, to conduct the diplomatic activity, whose emphasis is Peaceful Coexistence, so the translation of "Peaceful Coexistence" in English version made quite a clear interpretation of the connotation of the foreign policy. It is noticeable that besides literal translation there is also a note to further explain the connotation of this particular policy, in which "non-aggression and non-interference" a pair of negative noun phrases and the "equality and currency" a pair of positive nouns was utilized to convey the signal of respect, equality and mutual benefit in foreign affairs. In this way, it can help foreign readers to obtain an insight into our foreign policy, to better understand our desire to establish friendly diplomatic ties with all the countries in the world on the basis of good-neighborly and peaceful coexistence.

[Example 5]:

Source Text: 统筹推进“五位一体”总体布局，协调推进“四个全面”战略布局，不断把实现“两个一百年”奋斗目标推向前进。(32)

English Version: We need to implement **the Five-point Strategy**, put forward **the Four-pronged Strategy** and strive to achieve **the Two Centenary Goals**. (Xi 2017)

Notes: "The Five-Point Strategy" refers to keeping to China's overall development plan to follow fiscal, political, social, Communal and environmental progress.

Notes: "The Four-Branched Strategy" implies a complete and moderately thriving society in all respects, to additional amendment, to improve the rule of law, and to reinforce Party discipline.

Notes: "The Two Centenary Goals" refers to comprehensive construction of a discreetly affluent society in all avenues by the centenary of the CPC (founded in 1921) and to shape China into a progressive socialist nation that is thriving, strong, autonomous, culturally superior, and balanced by the centenary of the PRC (founded in 1949)

The policy of "五位一体" is literally translated as "the Five-Point Strategy". Five adjectives including "fiscal, diplomatic, social, Communal and environmental" are selected to accurately and comprehensively expound the five

development directions of the new era. The strategy was first introduced in the political report to the 18th CPC National Congress. At the same time, it also conforms to the official language of the original text and systematically introduces five strategic directions of China's development in the new era to foreign readers.

The policy of "四个全面" is literally translated as "The Four-Pronged Strategy". "The Four-Pronged Strategy" elaborates the main contradiction that must be resolved in the current cause of the Party and the country respectively from the people's livelihood, reform, the legal system, Party building, which is also the overall strategic layout of our party at present. The translation also adopts the method of literal translation and annotation and further explains four comprehensive and specific directions to foreign readers to achieve the purpose of accurate publicity.

The policy of "两个一百年" is literally translated into "The Two Centenary Goals", which have appeared 25 times in the second volume, and they are the great goals of the Party and the country in the new era set onward at the 18th CPC national congress. The first goal is by the centenary of the CPC (Communist Party of China) which was founded in 1921, we are to achieve the creating of a reasonably affluent society in all regards. The second goal is by the centenary of the PRC (People's Republic of China) which was founded in 1949, we are to build China into a contemporary socialist nation that is thriving, resilient, autonomous, culturally superior, and congenial. The notes not only clearly explain to foreign readers the specific content of the two goals to be achieved, but also point out the time when the Communist Party of China and the People's Republic of China were founded, so that readers may have a specific concept of time for the two centenary goals to be achieved.

In addition, like the translation of "两学一做" (Two Studies, One Action), the "三个代表" (the Theory of Three Represents) this kind of number-abbreviated expressions, the method of literal translation plus annotation is adopted. Literal translation not only can explain the surface meaning of the phrase visually but also maintain the expression style of the source language. Through annotation, it also conveys the specific contents of such policy to foreign readers comprehensively and deeply, so as to achieve the political purpose of external publicity.

C. the translation of Classical Literature

The traditional Chinese culture has a long history and is filled with ancient wisdom, which has laid a solid historical foundation for China's future prosperity and development. In the second volume of *Xi Jinping the Governance of China*, there are abundant ancient Chinese classics about governing the country, regulating the family and cultivating one's morality. Most foreigners can hardly perceive the essence of ancient Chinese culture with distinctive features. So in the process of translation, the translator is supposed to not only perceive the original



spirit on the basis of accurate understanding of original source, but also take the way of thinking and expression habit of target language readers into account to explain and spread the traditional Chinese culture in most acceptable way in order to strengthen the international influence of Chinese classical literature.

#### [Example 6]:

Source Text: 特别是各级领导干部要带头抓好家风。《礼记·大学》中说：“所谓治国必先齐其家者，其家不可教而能教人者，无之。” (32)

English Version: Officials at all levels must play a leading role in the promotion of good family culture. As the ancient Confucian Classic Book of Rites puts it, **“What is intended by ‘in order to regulate the state justifiably, it is essential first to standardize the family’ is that it is impractical for one to educate others while he cannot educate his own family.”** ( Xi 2017 )

The sentence of “所谓治国必先齐其家者，其家不可教而能教人者，无之。” comes from 《礼记·大学》(a collection of studies from the ancient time) which means if you cannot educate your own family well, you cannot teach others, let alone to govern the country. The translator adopts the method of literal translation, in which the subject clause leading by "what" is used as the main subject of the whole sentence corresponding to the content of the first clause of the original text. Then after the linking verb "is", a predictive clause leading by "that" is followed to explain the content of the second clause of the original text. Syntactically, the sentence structure of "subject + relative verb + predicate" is familiar by English readers, and also corresponds to that of the original text. In this way, the meaning of this sentence is elaborated to English readers systematically, which conforms to the translation principle of "being close to foreign audiences' demand for Chinese information" (25) and achieves the purpose of traditional culture publicity.

For source readers who are acquainted with historical allusions, it is easy to understand the story and significance behind the allusions. For the target readers, it is difficult for them to understand the allusions due to the differences in cultural backgrounds. Therefore, literal translation plus annotation should be adapted to point out the background knowledge like example 6, or free translation should be adopted to elaborate on the ideological connotation of such classical literature.

#### [Example 7]:

Source Text: 如果任由这些问题蔓延开来，后果不堪设想，那就可能发生毛泽东同志所形象比喻的“霸王别姬”了。(32)

English Version: If we permit these challenges to propagate like wildflowers, the outcomes will devastating,

and “the catastrophe of **Goodbye My Concubine**”, which Mao Zedong applied as a allegory or losing influence, may come real. (Xi 2017)

Notes: One of the last chapters in the lifetime of mutinous general Xiang Yu through the late Qin Dynasty ( 221 - 206 BC). Xiang, the self-declared “Overlord of Western Chu” could not endure different views, and his imperfect persona finally ensued in his collapse following the blockade of Gaixia. Xiang drank his last toasts with Concubine Yu and hummed words of bravery and mourn. Concubine Yu danced for Xiang one last time, took his blade and committed suicide. Xiang broke out of the blockade and escaped to the banks of Wujiang River, where he committed suicide. Collapse stemming from indiscriminate behavior and losing touch with the citizens .

The historical story of "farewell my concubine" is almost a household word in China. Xiang Yu's serious flawed personality sent him to the bluff of his political career and eventually committed suicide. However, due to the differences between historical and cultural factors, English readers may have no idea about the connotation of this allusion. If translators adopt free translation, the vitality of the story and the image of historical figures in this allusion will be lost in the target language. If literal translation applied, the twists and turns of the plot and the deep cultural implication of this historical allusion cannot convey only through the three words "farewell" "my" "concubine". Therefore, literal translation plus annotation is the most suitable method to elaborate the ups and downs of the plot and to portray the vivid characters which like the movie clips displayed before the eyes of foreign readers, and comments of the last sentence also point out the reasons for the failure of the Xiang, making English readers fully comprehend the deep implication behind the allusion.

#### [Example 8]:

Source Text: 为此，我们必须坚持发展为了人民、发展依靠人民、发展成果由人民共享，作出更有效的制度安排，使全体人民朝着共同富裕方向稳步前进，绝不能出现“富者累巨万，贫者食糟糠”的现象。(32)

English Version: Therefore, our driving principle must be that development is for the people and by the people, and its benefits are shared by the people. We must design more effective systems to steadily lead all the people to common prosperity, and **eradicate the huge gap between the rich and poor.** ( Xi 2017 )

The classical poem of "富者累巨万，贫者食糟糠" comes from Ban Gu's 《汉书·食货志》 in Han dynasty. 《汉书·食货志》 talks about the history of the development of food and goods in ancient China and the social and



economic situation in the western Han dynasty are summarized. The work includes two parts, the first part concentrates on food which records the agricultural and economic development; the second part focuses on goods, handicraft industry, commercial and monetary condition. The poem "富者累亿万，贫者食糟糠" literally means that among the common people, the property of the rich families is thousands of thousands, while the poor families can only eat chaff and swallow vegetables. It is used to describe the social phenomenon of the giant gap between the rich and the poor and unequal income distribution. If translators choose to translate the poem literally as above, foreign readers may have no chance to know the determination of the Communist Party of China (CPC) is to lead all the people steadily toward common prosperity, which would only magnify the social phenomenon of the large gap between the rich and poor. Therefore, free translation is an appropriate method here, translators elect an English verb phrase "eradicate the gap" to focus the readers' attention on the government's initiative to eliminate the huge gap to reach common prosperity, which is also beneficial to the positive image construction of the government.

As can be seen from the above examples, the translation methods of ancient Chinese classics are also flexible and diverse. As for the expressions of classical Chinese literature which can be perceived for both Chinese and foreign readers in their own cultural backgrounds, literal translation is supposed to be applied to convey the information of source text; For historical allusions with typical Chinese cultural characteristics, the translation strategy of "literal translation + annotation" should be selected to facilitate foreign readers' acquisition for the ideological connotation of target language. However, sometimes in ancient Chinese translation, such as for example 8, the literal translation is difficult to accurately spread the source text content, so the translation method of "free translation + omitted annotation", which abandons the language form of ancient Chinese and omits annotations is adopted. The lack of the source language form in ancient poem expression makes translation cannot fulfill the beauty of sound, the beauty of meaning and the beauty of form simultaneously, which is "three beauty" translation requirements put forward by (37). Though it is a pity in the process of translation, which is hard to avoid as the differences in language and cultural background (38). The author regarded it as the lost beauty in translation. When retaining the linguistic form of the source language and conveying the cultural connotation of a source language are incompatible, translators should adhere to the basic principle of "faithfulness" to convey source text information so as to maximize the compatibility of classical literature translation with Chinese and foreign language (39).

## V. CONCLUSION

The political literature produced under the unique historical and cultural backgrounds is a huge corpus resource. Based on the rich examples in *Xi Jinping on the*

*Governance of China*, this paper examines the translation strategies of idioms, policies and ancient allusions quoted from the perspective of cultural translation. It is found that the translation strategies are diversified according to the content of the source text as well as the specific translation target to be achieved. For example, the translation of idiom can be translated literally or freely to achieve the purpose of information and cultural exchanges; Generally, literal translation and annotation are adapted to interpret the specific contents of China's major policies in a comprehensive and detailed way to foreign readers. The ancient allusions can be translated literally or freely according to the needs of translation, and specific problems should be treated in a specific way. Political document translation is not only the transformation of language systems between the source text and target language but also the transmission of cultural factors behind the source language. This not only requires the translator to have bilingual language skills, being proficient in politics, history, culture as well as comprehensive and profound background knowledge but also attains a certain political sensitivity, sense of responsibility and mission. With language and culture translation as the bridge, to promote Chinese elements to the world and Chinese culture is disseminated to achieve the purpose of external communication and political publicity.

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