

Discourse Construction and Publicity Translation in the Perspective of Effective International Communication

Lei Dai

Department of English, Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan, China

dailei218@whut.edu.cn

Keywords: Chinese discourse system; publicity translation; effective international communication

Abstract. This research begins by expounding the significance for China to build up a typically political and cultural Chinese discourse system in the perspective of effective international communication. It argues that its establishment will offer a key for the world to better understand China, mitigate the negative portrayal of China's image by Western powers, and facilitate China's contribution to world peace, stability and development as well as its own sustainable growth and reforms. Based on a case study of the English translated version of Chinese President Xi Jinping's book *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, the paper then finds out that the translation tries to deliver those core notions intact to target receptors while ensuring its acceptability of the adopted translation strategies. It concludes that the direct translation strategy is principally used, together with some explanations. Such strategic combination is in line with China's publicity mindset that integrates effective international communication with telling the Chinese stories well.

1. The origin of a typically Chinese discourse system for effective international communication

With the ever-growing globalization and multi-polarization, the competition among the world's major countries has spilled out of the military, economic and hi-tech boundaries into such prominent soft power as politics, diplomacy and culture. For a long time, a small number of Western powers have been dominating the global trend of major issues by virtue of their discourse hegemony, while developing countries and emerging economies, including China, have been marginalized. Thanks to its reform and opening-up drive over the past decades, China not only adheres to the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, striving to build up a well-off society in an all-round way, but is also pondering about the world situation using its core cultural and political values. With a louder and clearer voice on the global arena, the country is more and more significantly impacting on the international community.

Since the 18th National Congress of CPC (the Communist Party of China), China's soft power and global discourse capability have been prioritized high on its political agenda, with the building of a discourse system bridging China and the world reiterated. The *Plan of Action* passed at the 3rd Plenary Session of the 18th CPC National Congress stresses the necessity to build a discourse system to facilitate China's Go-Global initiative.

Innovative ways of overseas-oriented publicity are also encouraged so that the core Chinese values can be conveyed effectively to the rest of the world without its international image compromised. “It is the first time that construing a foreign-oriented strategic discourse system has been declared by the CPC central committee” [1]. Additionally, President Xi Jinping himself vigorously advocates creative moves in developing the system, stimulating contributions of new concepts, categories and expressions for the country to better tell its stories and articulate its ideas to the outside world.

2. The significance of discourse building

Firstly, it is a key to understanding China. Fundamentally, establishing a discourse system connecting China and the world is aimed at “enabling the world to better appreciate China so that its voice can be clearly and accurately heard around the globe” [1]. As the witness and implementer of China’s rapid development since the initiation of the reform and opening-up policy in 1978, Chinese people are the most eligible and capable to explain their culture, institutions, development strategies and core values to the world comprehensively and accurately. Through a discourse system that both embodies its political and cultural features and identifies with the feelings of the target receptors, China can truly be an amazing story-teller, presenting a real China to the rest of the world.

Secondly, it is an effective way to accentuate China’s global voice. Thanks to all-round socioeconomic development and the almost accomplished well-off society, China is increasingly avid to enhance its international say, “delivering its values and moral system to the world and contributing to cultural diversity” [2]. However, for long China has been misinterpreted by the West, with its growth and elevated global clout vilified, as evidenced by such irresponsible finger-pointing as “China threat” and “China neocolonialism”, which is not only misleading but also impairs China’s images. Therefore, the country urgently needs to grab back the helm of its propaganda: from being portrayed to self-portraying, namely building up its own publicity platform to spread its development practice and core values without external prejudices.

Thirdly, it provides a media safety net for its development. “It is essential to create a favourable international media ecosystem for China’s further reforms and development” [3]. Over the past four decades, China has been striving to develop its economy, improve people’s livelihood and contribute to the stability, peace and development of the international community. However, the few Western powers dominating the media floor tend to seize every opportunity available to distort China’s image by viciously spreading rumors against China’s progress. Should they succeed, it would be extremely difficult, if not possible, for China to concentrate on developing the living standards of its people, boosting its outbound investment strategies and providing developing economies with the necessary capital, technology and managerial expertise. Therefore, even amid dramatic development, China is in dire need more than ever of a friendly international ambience as well as a platform to articulate itself. Only with them can the Asian giant sustain rapid socioeconomic growth.

Last but not least, it offers good solutions to many development problems around the world. In recent years, with economic globalization, world multi-polarization and IT-driven social transformations, the international political and economic order and ideology gripped for long by the West are gradually emancipated, with countries becoming increasingly interdependent and interconnected in their joint pursuit for development. In this context, as a developing economy with 1.4 billion citizens, China maintains remarkable growth in economy and international influence despite its daunting tasks in curbing population explosion, preserving environment and resources, expanding employment, improving medicare and education as well as meeting up with international challenges. Different from their paths to success and ways of governance, the rest of the world, particularly the West, is eager to find some clues. Therefore, through establishing and improving its own discourse system, China will be able to disseminate to the world its experience and core values in securing socioeconomic triumphs, contributing enormously to global peace and development.

3. The connotation of the Chinese discourse system and the principles for publicity translation

Building the Chinese discourse system and promoting publicity translation should both be rooted on preserving the fine Chinese traditions and cultures, “with contemporary Chinese values, notions and ethos as the centerpiece of the cause” [1]. Besides, “to facilitate understanding and impress the foreign audience and readership, it is necessary to adapt the rigorous political discourse into flexible academic discourse, appealing hands-on experiences and riveting stories using concise language and vivid metaphors” [4].

Therefore, seen from translation, the connotation of an effective international communication is “to defend China’s national interests, focusing on an accurate delivery of political and cultural messages” [5]. Conversely, regarding the linguistic output, the translated version should sound idiomatic, fully considering the reception of foreigners. In this sense, “listening” and “speaking” should be equally emphasized: China needs to assert itself on this platform while ensuring the acceptability of the delivery. Given the tremendous differences between Chinese and English, “it is harmful to cling only to the linguistic correspondence while overlooking the mindset of the receivers for it might provoke confrontations with translation acceptability and effects affected” [6].

Chinese discourse system is aimed at disseminating core Chinese values ingrained in its culture, so one of its most important parts is culture-specific expressions, including idioms, proverbs, sayings, aphorisms, adages, poems and so on. For example, Premier Wen Jianbao was renowned as a gentle poetic Premier for his frequent quotations of Chinese classics at the cabinet press conferences. Likewise, Premier Li Keqiang likes to use amicable and colloquial language and quote idioms and proverbs when speaking on important occasions. President Xi Jinping is also recognized for his charismatic speaking style in a series of speeches, newspaper articles and interviews where he occasionally uses colloquial approachable phrases. Thus, Chinese cultural terms play a significant role in the discourse system.

Besides, the Chinese discourse system bears distinctive political features, through which CPC’s core values and ideas on politics, diplomacy, economy, governance and so on are propagandized. For example, though such

familiar notions as “socialist core values”, “Chinese dream”, “belt and road initiative” and “building a moderately well-off society in an all-round way” are concerned with the country’s economic and technical development, environmental protection and governance, they are essentially political discourse. So publicity translation is aimed to introduce to the rest of the world China’s core values on governance so as to disseminate its culture and promote the world’s understanding of China. Additionally, such estrangement due to differences in ideology can be mitigated, creating a sound media ecosystem for China’s continuous reform and opening-up as well as economic growth.

4. The English strategies for Xi Jinping: The Governance of China

The English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* weighs significantly in China’s politics. Not long since the publication of its Chinese original, it has been translated into dozens of languages, showcasing CPC’s governance of China to the rest of the world. It was translated by a “national team” made up of senior translators from the news office of China’s State Council, the research office of CPC archives and China Foreign Languages Publishing Administration. Familiar with Chinese and Western languages and having internalized all kinds of translation strategies, they not only boast admirable political awareness, cultural attainment and translation competence, but can also keep pace with times, telling well Chinese stories through translation and embodying the features of times. Thus the translation represents the highest level among publicity translated works, bearing a very high research value. By comparing the Chinese original and the English version, this paper has found out the English translation strategies for the discourse typically Chinese, particularly those cultural factors involved.

As aforementioned, the establishment of a Chinese discourse system is aimed at accurately, comprehensively and animatedly presenting core Chinese political and cultural values to the rest of the world. Looking back at the May 4th Movement and the New Culture Movement taking place in China one century ago, abundant scientific, social and humanistic notions of the Western societies were introduced into China’s cultural and academic circles, greatly enriching China’s language and culture. The taking-in strategy nicknamed by Lu Xun, a world-renowned Chinese literary scholar, teemed with the contemporary English-Chinese translation activities. Many of the familiar terms to the Chinese people were actually taken in from the West. In fact, one of the core values China wants to spread is building a community of a shared future. Therefore, based on the homogeneity of human cultures, it is a good choice for the country to directly disseminate its culture abroad.

In the perspective of effective intercultural communication, the Chinese discourse system is supposed to approach the cognition of the target culture receptors while actively impressing them with the Chinese culture. However for long the discourse building is plagued with two embarrassing extremes: on one hand it is obsessed with disseminating Chinese culture intact to the audience, on the other hand the English translations completely lose the Chinese cultural features, unimpressed at all. To avoid such two extremes, the English translation of President Xi’s book has added in some proper explanations to make it acceptable to the readers while trying to

maximally retain the Chinese culture. This is because, essentially, Chinese and English cultures are different. Cultural gaps prevail in ideology, values, mindsets, rituals and so forth. The strategy of explanation which tries to coordinate the two cultures, plays an important role in narrowing the cultural gaps.

The building of discourse system is actually bridging the source text and the target text, the sender and the receiver and the Chinese culture and foreign culture. The premise for winning understanding and recognition for its culture is to be aware of the cultural differences. The core issue of cultural recognition is clarifying differences. Certain Chinese cultural terms cannot be conveyed through direct translation or explanation. Or when used, they will exceed the up limit of explanation, making the translation too long, confusing and even contradicting the original meaning. Therefore in order to streamline the representation of the Chinese culture in the target text, acceptability should be prioritized in publicity translation. Despite their tremendous differences, at times it is possible to find an alternative yet equivalent way in English to replace the Chinese cultural expressions. But it is advocated that Chinese culture-specific expressions are maximally retained in the translation now that the main function of the discourse system is to articulate China's core values.

5. Conclusion

To summarize, Chinese discourse in this paper refers to those cultural and political notions typically Chinese in key political speeches and documents by CPC central committee and leaders on the development of Socialism with Chinese characteristics. Amid its intercultural communication, the translator tries to deliver those core notions intact to target receptors while ensuring the acceptability of the adopted translation strategies. After analyzing the typical cases in the English version of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, it is salient that the direct translation strategy is principally used, together with some explanations. In other words, the translator endeavors to convey the Chinese discourse as it actually is to the target readership and audience, explaining properly certain points here and there which would otherwise be difficult to understand. So the translation of the typically Chinese discourse is essential to China's publicity translation while the ultimate rule is to coordinate things typically Chinese and their acceptability in the target culture.

6. Acknowledgement

This research was financially supported by the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities (Wuhan University of Technology), PRC on the project On the English Translation of the Core Political Concepts of China: A Parallel Corpus Approach (program code: 2019VI004).

References

- [1] X.H. Wang: Building a Chinese Discourse System for Effective International Communication. *Chinese Journalists* Vol. 5 (2016), p. 10.

- [2] L. Bai: The Adaptation of the Original Text in Publicity Translation. *Foreign Languages and Literature* Vol. 5 (2018), p. 26.
- [3] Y.L. Chen and Y.L. Li: New Concepts, Categories and Expressions for Effective International Communication. *Red Flag Writings*. Vol. 1 (2014), p. 27.
- [4] Y.Z. Guo, Prioritizing the Translation of CPC Central Committee's Archives. *Marxism and Reality*. Vol. 4 (2014), p.5-6.
- [5] P. Yang: On the International Communication of Chinese Political Discourse from the Perspective of Keywords to Understand China. *International Communication*. Vol. 4 (2017), p. 22.
- [6] J. Wen: Effectively Transmitting China's Voice by Grasping the International Say. *Chinese Journalists*. Vol. 4 (2016), p.207.