

## Analysis on President Xi Jinping's Expressions in Publicity Translation

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### Abstract

In order to make China and Chinese stories better heard, publicity translation has a long way to go and shoulders an arduous task. Although there are some studies about publicity translation, yet only a few have been done on speeches by Chinese leaders. This paper studies several problems as follows: features of President Xi Jinping's stylistic expressions and analysis on them; the application of publicity translation theories and factors considered while translating, including the translation techniques employed.

**Key words:** Xi's stylistic expressions; English translation features; Translation theories of publicity

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

In international relations, China's diplomacy has entered a new stage, and its international influence continues to grow. Where will China go? What changes can China make to the world? The answers can be found from different aspects. Particularly, they can be answered by the CPC leaders speeches reported to Chinese and the world

wide. Xi Jinping (Xi) is one of the most characteristic figures in present China, whose speeches, of salient features, are under discussion. However, there are not so many studies on the Chinese-English (C-E) translation. In effect, as a medium for publicity, for one thing, it contributes to interpreting the concepts and principles of the CPC's new leadership to governance, so that the international community can learn more about China, understand China's ideas, the path of development, and the domestic and foreign policies better. For another, it serves as a practical reference for English graduates and translators in this field.

This paper selects main material resources from the book *Xi Jinping The Governance of China*, published in 2014, both in Chinese and English. It is a collection of Xi's major works from November 15, 2012 to June 13, 2014, consisting of 79 speeches, talks, interviews, instructions and correspondence in 18 chapters. Each is accompanied by relevant notes about China's social system, history and culture for readers' reference. Other newly speeches or talks by Xi from the Internet are also taken as examples for additional reference.

### 2. TRANSLATION THEORY OF PUBLICITY

#### 2.1 Traditional Publicity

In general, different from other translations, text of publicity is more rigid and official. Meanwhile, the theories adopted are multiple and controversial. Furthermore, Xi's speeches contain more expressions with personal styles and distinct Chinese characteristics. These give rise to more difficulties to the publicity translation.

One typical example is the translation of *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*. The improvement of its translation, at present, has experienced three changing periods diachronically, of which the biggest change is

from literal translation to liberal translation, from target-oriented translation to source-oriented translation. (Wu, 2012)

Liberal translation is the traditional principle of publicity, which, in Nida's opinion, is the principle of formal equivalence—basically source-oriented. It is designed to reveal as much as possible of the form and content of the original message. Generally in order to remain the original text style, the form is the dominant consideration. However, it should be noted that Chinese and English are two different languages: Chinese is hypotaxis while English is parataxis. For this reason, there can be no absolute correspondence between languages.

## 2.2 Modern Publicity

Katharina Reiss classifies texts into the informative, expressive and the operative. Publicity—especially speeches or talks from the central leadership, pertains to expressive text, which is form-focused. However, the biggest distinction of publicity is its particularity—information loaded, the information that is more “logical” and “political”, which requires that the translation should be correct and accurate. (Liu, 2010, p.24) Thus publicity translation is a mixed variety. Even though, traditional translation principles should be observed—the fidelity of the translation to the original text, to make sure the target language is fluent and understandable. However, apart from ensuring TL highly factual, its peculiarity cannot be ignored. (Zhang, 2013, pp.18-19)

Huang Youyi, vice president of Translators Association of China, pointed that publicity translation should be based on the “Three Principles of Closeness”:

Be close to actual conditions of China's growth;

Be close to needs that readers abroad want to know more about China;

Be close to foreign readers' thinking habit. (Huang, 2004)

The most primary purpose of the publicity and its translation is to convey correct information. By doing so, the goal of promoting the Chinese culture and making China heard can be achieved. The essence of translation is to equal the SL and TL by transferring and changing messages, which is what we call the “faithfulness”. In publicity translation, “political faithfulness” should be given the priority, which is to adhere to political logic and to achieve the goal of maximum equivalence or the closest equivalence. (Sun, 2014) Wang Zuoliang once said, while translating, first, being reliable, which means being loyal to the original; second, being readable--smoothness. Consequently, on the basis of information correctness, reader is the second factor that translator should consider. In one word, translation should be reader-oriented. Peter Newmark (2001, p.15) classifies readers as:

The expert

The educated layman

The uninformed

For China's publicity, b and c take up the most. Therefore, translation approaches are very important, and worth deliberation. Newmark (2001, pp.40-80) also pointed in his book *Approaches to Translation*, there are semantic translation and communicative translation. One is author-centered whilst the other is reader-centered:

“The translator has to assist his reader. He may have to explain or transpose allusions, supply reasons. It is his duty to make his version a little more accessible to the reader, to find at least some pattern in non-sense”. (Newmark, 2001, pp.127-128)

If considered the prospective readers, to make the translation understandable and readable, generally the form is usually sacrificed for the sake of the content. It determines whether foreign readers are interested in keeping reading, even knowing it, knowing China.

Therefore, first, think over the text type. This is the fundamental of choosing translation theories. Second, because of two different languages, translators should make the most of their subjectivity and initiatives: thinking of the targeted readers at the core, rendering into the expressions they are familiar with, so that they can understand it and accept it.

As a new representative profile, Xi's stylistic expressions are indispensable. To retain and reflect his individual features, the best way is to retain the form of his expressions. This is the third factor. Appropriate dissimulation can serve to distinguish cultural differences.

Information, reader and form are incorporated as an inseparable entity.

## 3. ANALYSIS ON C-E TRANSLATION OF XI'S STYLISTIC EXPRESSIONS

### 3.1 Words

English is structure-centered while Chinese is meaning-centered. Essentially Chinese words are foreign to native English-speaking readers because of the intricate features Chinese embodied. (徐明强, 2014) Apart from this, Xi's stylistic words are meaning-loaded. Word for word translation is not enough to allow it to convey the exact meaning, even message-mistaken. If readers are not familiar with the topic or field, they may not grasp the exact meaning. Therefore, it's important to know the words connotation. In this part, two representatives are given.

Eg 1 中国梦

When Xi was inaugurated during the National People's Congress, he gave a speech on “中国梦”. From then on, heated discussions on how to translate “中国梦” into English was going. Among all the translations “Chinese dream, China dream, China's dream, the dream of China, Chinese people's dream, Chinese nation's dream”, there are two versions left -- China dream and Chinese dream.

Literally, 中国+梦 can be translated into:  
中国 / 梦  
China / Dream

With too many English versions, it's easy to confuse readers. Chinese characters are parataxis, with much information loaded. So it's primary to know the connotation behind it.

Xi pointed out that Chinese dream is the great renewal of the Chinese nation. In the book *Xi Jinping The Governance of China*, Chinese dream means "to achieving rejuvenation of the Chinese nation—make China prosperous and strong, rejuvenate the nation, and bring happiness to the Chinese people". (Xi Jinping, 2014: 40-41) Moreover, in the speech to outstanding young representatives from all walks of life on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Xi emphasized that Chinese dream is the dream of the nation, but also of every ordinary Chinese.

Grammatically, "China" is a noun while polysemous "Chinese" is an adjective "中国的, 中华的, 中国人的, 华人的". The "adjective+noun" is preferred in English. In addition, "Chinese dream" is similar to "American dream" in form. Prof. Tom Stertz from University of Minnesota commented that it's "weird, awkward" to put "China" and "dream" together. "Chinese dream" is more acceptable for English-speaking readers.

The 25<sup>th</sup> C-E Translation Seminar Interactional Communication Committee of Translators Association of China (TAC) in 2013 selected and translated 中国梦 both as China's dream and Chinese dream. Until 2014, the Translator's Section of Chinese Foreign Ministry retranslated it into the Chinese ~~dream~~:

实现中华民族伟大复兴的中国梦是近代以来中华民族的夙愿。

The Chinese dream, which is the great renewal of the Chinese nation, has been its long cherished dream since modern times.

So the better translation of "中国梦" is the Chinese dream—the great renewal of the Chinese nation.

Eg 2老虎和苍蝇一起打

“老虎+苍蝇+一起+打” can be literally interpreted as:

老虎 / 苍蝇 / 一起 / 打

tigers / flies / together / beat

“老虎苍蝇一起打” is a new term that Xi used to anti-corruption. Literally, it can be translated as “to beat tigers and flies together”. However, this is just the superficial meaning of it, not the deeper implication Xi stresses.

When it comes to Chinese images, cultural meaning should be of top consideration. For example, in the speech at an enlarged meeting of the Central Military Commission, Xi requested that “坚持军事斗争准备的龙头地位不动摇”. (Xi, 2014, p.216) In English, “龙头” is the head of dragon, literally. 龙 (dragon) in Chinese culture is the symbol of noble or glory whereas it represents the fierce beast in western countries. To avoid the cultural shock and make readers understand it,

we should make the connotation clear before translating. So “坚持军事斗争准备的龙头地位不动摇” can be translated as “Being ‘action ready’ must be its major task”.

Similarly, “老虎”, tiger is defined as a large wild animal of cat family, which has yellowish fur with black lines and lives in some parts of Asia. But, In William Blake's poem, *The Tiger*, the tiger is a positive figure. In addition, tigers are mostly ranged across Asia. Even in some Asian cultures, tiger has different meanings, some not negative. For instance, the Malaysian tiger is the national animal of Malaysia. The Siberian tiger is the national animal of South Korea.

Fly is a small flying insect with two wings defined from *the Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary*. In the novel, *Lord of the Flies*, by William Golding, the lord of the flies, originates from Hebrew Baalzebub. Baalzebub, in the Bible, is “the chief spirit of evil and adversary of God or tempter of mankind or master of Hell”. It is synonymous with ugliness.

Therefore, the first is to know the real referent that Xi pointed to by “tigers” and “flies”. They are referents to corrupt officials, but they are still different. Tigers mean corrupt people with high rank and serious corruption cases they commit. Flies refer to corrupt people, but their ranks are relatively lower. To make readers clearer, it's important to explain to them what tigers and flies really are.

Some other translations like:

a. go after both tigers and flies, that is, both the high and low-ranking officials who have benefited from graft (The 25<sup>th</sup> C-E Translation Seminar Interactional Communication Committee of Translators Association of China (TAC) ).

b. to crack down on both “tigers” and “flies” – powerful leaders and lowly bureaucrats (*The Guardian*).

“Crack down on somebody or something” is to try harder to prevent an illegal activity and deal more severely with those who are caught doing it. However, “go after” means “to chase or follow somebody”. “Crack down” is better than “go after” for it gives expressions to Xi's determination to fight corruption.

As discussed above, the suggested translation is to crack down on both “tigers” and “flies”—high and low-ranking officials who have benefited from graft’.

### 3.2 Rhetoric

As is known, rhetoric is used to inform, persuade, or motivate particular audiences in specific situations. Newmark (1988, pp.13-14) scales text formality into officialese, official, formal, neutral, informal, colloquial, slang and taboo. Also, he scales emotional tone into intense, factual and understatement. So it is found some correlation between formality and emotional tone in publicity. For example, official style is factual, while colloquialisms and slang tend to be emotive. And when

they mix, the meaning behind is multiplied, so does the translation technique.

Eg 1 形象地说<sup>1</sup>, 理想信念是共产党人精神上的“钙”<sup>2</sup>, / 没有理想信念, 理想信念不坚定<sup>3</sup>, 精神上就会“缺钙”<sup>4</sup>, 就会得“软骨病”<sup>5</sup>。

Put figuratively<sup>1</sup>, the ideals and convictions of Communists are the marrow of their faith<sup>2</sup>. / Without, or with weak, ideals or convictions<sup>3</sup>, they would be deprived of their marrow<sup>4</sup> and suffer from “lack of backbone.”<sup>5</sup>

First, linear translation retains the original style, identical to the form but with no violation of meaning. Second, Xi borrows bio-elements “钙” (calcium) and the medical terminology “软骨病” (chondropathy) into political area. But if translated literally, it seems rigid and confusing — “The ideals and convictions of Communists are the calcium of their spirit” and “Without them, we will suffer chondropathy”. It's well-known that calcium is of great importance to people's health, and chondropathy does harm to human body. Abstract but specific, Xi's idea is to highlight the importance of ideals and convictions: without ideals and convictions, it's like suffering calcium deficiency. Without them, there are no vigor and support. Therefore, “marrow of the faith” and “lack of backbone” are right to convey this meaning.

Cf:

没有理想信念, 就会导致精神上“缺钙”。

Without ideals and convictions one's spirit becomes weak.

Even though it violates the equivalence of form, it is right to send the message and readers can understand the meaning directly.

Eg 2 亚洲各国就像一盏盏明灯<sup>1</sup>, / 只有串联并联起来<sup>2</sup>, 才能让亚洲的夜空灯火辉煌<sup>3</sup>。

Asian countries are just like a cluster of bright lanterns<sup>1</sup>. / Only when we link them together<sup>2</sup>, can we light up the night sky in our continent<sup>3</sup>.

Reduplication is commonly used as plurality in Chinese, “一盏盏, 一朵朵, 一束束”, etc. But in English, it is seen as redundancy. “一盏盏” means a lot, but if translated as “Asian countries are just like a lot of bright lanterns”, it is colorless and emotionless. In the *Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary* “cluster” is described as a group of things of the same type that grow or appear close together.

As for the image “灯”, there are synonymous words such as light, lamp and lantern. But they have some differences. Definitions are from the *Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary*:

light: a thing that produces light, especially an electric light

lamp: a device that uses electricity, oil or gas to produce light

lantern: a lamp in a container, often a metal case with glass sides, that has a handle, so that you can carry it outside/ light in a transparent protective case

By comparison, considering the situational context, “lantern” is more vivid. When a cluster of bright lanterns are linked together, in front of the readers there is a beautiful and prospective scene. This presents readers a bright and confident future, which is what Xi's speech tries to make sense. Therefore, to manifest Xi's stylistic expressions in metaphor, good diction plays a crucial role.

### 3.3 Colloquialism

Colloquialism is the application of folk adage, of which most are cultural and local expressions. Thus, word-for-word translation will be under-translation. So it's necessary to compensate the original meaning by using colloquialism in translation to make it clear and understandable.

Eg 1 小康不小康, 关键看老乡

To achieve initial prosperity in the country, it is crucial to raise the rural living standard.

“关键看老乡”, literally, means “the key is to see the fellow-countrymen”. It is confusing and illogical. “老乡”(fellow-countrymen) here is not referring to a certain group of people, but all the rural population. In addition, “to see them” does not mean to depend on them or on their efforts, but to improve their living standard. The connotation here is to increase their income and help them lead a better life.

Differently, in the speech to representatives attending the Seventh Conference of Friendship of Overseas Chinese Associations, Xi said, “老乡见老乡, 两眼泪汪汪”. “老乡” here refers to its original meaning—fellow townsman. The whole sentence can be translated into “Your eyes brim with tears when you encounter a fellow townsman in a distant land”. The core meaning has been conveyed notwithstanding violation of original form.

Eg 2 朋友多了, 路才好走。

More friends, more opportunities.

If translated in a literal way, it is “more friends, more roads”, which is confusing for the “roads” contain too many meanings. So translating it into “opportunities” is closer to Xi's meaning and is easier for readers to understand.

### 3.4 Quotation

There are two kinds of quotations in Xi's speeches:

Borrowing: purposeful quotation from other fields, with cross-domain meanings—given a new meaning related to the topic, e.g. 蛮拼的, 点赞.

Citing: quotation of classical Chinese poetry.

千磨万击还坚劲, 任尔东西南北风。

Here are two examples:

Eg 1 APEC蓝

“Neologisms are perhaps the non-literary and the professional translator's biggest problem”. (Newmark, 2001, p.140) “APEC 蓝” is a popular phrase coined by Chinese netizens to describe the blue sky in the heavily-

polluted city of Beijing during the APEC week, which was a result of tough emission-reduction measures.

When confronted a new word, traditionally, the first step is to find the equivalents or the near equivalent. If they are right to convey the meaning, it is a good translation.

At the welcome dinner of the 22nd APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, Xi borrowed "APEC蓝" properly:

“也有人说<sup>1</sup>，现在北京的蓝天是APEC蓝<sup>2</sup>，美好而短暂<sup>3</sup>，过了这一阵就没了<sup>4</sup>，我希望并相信通过不懈的努力<sup>5</sup>，APEC蓝能够保持下去<sup>6</sup>。”

Some people call<sup>1</sup> the clear Beijing sky these days “the APEC blue”<sup>2</sup> and say it is beautiful but temporary<sup>3</sup>, and it will be gone soon after the APEC meeting<sup>4</sup>. I hope and believe that, with persistent efforts<sup>5</sup>, the APEC blue will be here to stay<sup>6</sup>.

After that, a flock of “APEC blue” appeared in foreign media. In a report, “China Promises Permanent APEC Blue in 2030”, from *FORBES* in November 25th, 2014, “APEC blue” repeated 6 times (in a 453-word report). On November 7th, 2014, *Yahoo* news reported “China state media defends ‘APEC blue’ skies”. In *BBC* news “Daily life comes to stand-still in Beijing during APEC”, on November 10, 2014, and *the Guardian* also quoted this new phrase. This shows that the translation “APEC blue” is basically accepted by people outside of China.

Xi's citation of APEC blue helps develop it as a new word with new meaning and new usage--something is beautiful but fleeting and ultimately inauthentic.

Eg 2山明<sup>1</sup>水净<sup>2</sup>夜来霜<sup>3</sup>，数树深红<sup>4</sup>出浅黄<sup>5</sup>。

The water is clear<sup>2</sup> and the mountain is bright<sup>1</sup>,

The frost comes in at night<sup>3</sup>;

Trees are covered with deep scarlet leaves<sup>4</sup>

Mixed with yellow that is light<sup>5</sup>.

Xi likes to quote classical poetry, verse and Chinese Ci to make his speeches more poetic. It's easy to render the surface meaning of a poem by conforming to the content, sometimes with violation of source language features. In this example, “霜” and “黄” are ended in each line with the rhyme “-ang” while in the English translation, bright, night and light are rhymed with “ai”. This poem-to-poem translation makes English-speaking readers feel that it is an English poem, catchy and with no deliberateness.

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## CONCLUSION

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The text of publicity is a mixed variety, expressive, informative and communicative. President Xi's stylistic expressions determine that traditional literal translation could sometimes fail to convey the exact meaning, let alone his salient features. Therefore, it's of great importance to give the translators' subjectivity, initiative and re-creativity a full play.

**Four Features:** This paper shows the features of Xi's stylistic expressions and the characteristics can be concluded as follows:

Words--Words of Xi's style are short but much more informative, fully displaying his concepts of governance.

Rhetoric--Xi is using rhetoric to polish his expressions to attract readers attention, which focuses on the metaphor he uses. Vivid metaphor helps enrich his language, at the same time, which is easier to understand.

Colloquialism--Xi's use of colloquialism serves to get himself closer to ordinary people by showing his affinity.

Quotation--Xi's command of Chinese language with literary grace and aesthetic appeal as well as his awareness of Chinese culture is embodied in his speeches, whose purpose of making the world heard is obvious.

**Three Factors:** Based on Newmark, Nida and other major translators' theories, the paper indicates factors considered while translating: information-conveying and readers & listeners-oriented. By the analysis of English translation of Xi's stylistic expressions, to demonstrate Xi's stylistic expressions—his conversational manner and easy verbal felicity, three factors should be concerned:

information

readers

form

The first is to make sure correctness. The second requires readability. The third pursues to show Xi's stylistic expressions and ingenuity. Only in this way will readers be rewarded with a more complete, objective and rational understanding of Xi and China.

**Four Aspects of C-E Translation and Some Suggestions:** This paper provides better versions for controversial translations, such as “中国梦” (the Chinese dream). However, it only studies four aspects of C-E translation of Xi's stylistic expressions (Words, Rhetoric, Colloquialism, Quotation), as to the other aspects, more detailed studies need to be explored in the future. For instance, under the consideration of both situational and cultural contexts, restrictive appositive--personal pronoun WE and possessive pronoun OUR, is frequently added in the translation from Chinese into English, which is a method of translation--amplification, so as to make the translation version more English rather than Chinglish, meanwhile, getting closer to the readers and showing them great amenity and affinity from Chinese traditional culture.

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