

RESEARCH ON TRANSLATION STRATEGY OF “MORAL CULTIVATION” IN POLITICAL LITERATURE - XI JINPING YONG DIAN

PESQUISA SOBRE ESTRATÉGIA DE TRADUÇÃO DE
“CULTIVO MORAL” NA LITERATURA POLÍTICA - XI
JINPING YONG DIAN

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Abstract: Political literature translation serves as a vital gateway through which the world gains insight into China. It extends beyond mere foreign policies and domestic news, delving into the intricate realm of ancient Chinese literature. This literary treasure trove includes the profound prose of ancient pre-Qin literature and the exquisite verses penned by poets from various dynasties. Scholarly research reveals that a spectrum of translation approaches has been employed in this endeavor. Literal translation, literal translation paired with free translation, and literal translation combined with amplification have all proven to be valuable tools. These methods, when deftly applied, not only convey the original essence of these ancient Chinese literary expressions but also deftly intertwine the wisdom of ancient classics with contemporary governance ideologies. This fusion effectively conveys the deep-rooted cultural riches of China's classical heritage, enabling cross-cultural communication and facilitating political outreach. In essence, political literature translation acts as an intricate bridge, connecting the intricacies of Chinese history and culture with the modern world, thereby fulfilling the dual purpose of cultural exchange and political communication. In a rapidly globalizing world, this nuanced translation becomes increasingly essential, shaping the perception of China and fostering international cooperation and understanding.

Key words: Moral Cultivation; Translation strategy; External publicity translation

Resumo: A tradução de literatura política serve como uma porta vital através da qual o mundo obtém informações sobre a China. Estende-se além da mera política externa e das notícias internas, investigando o intrincado reino da antiga literatura chinesa. Este tesouro literário inclui a prosa profunda da antiga literatura pré-Qin e os versos requintados escritos por poetas de várias dinastias. Pesquisas acadêmicas revelam que um espectro de abordagens de tradução tem sido empregado nessa empreitada. A tradução literal, a tradução literal combinada com a tradução livre e a tradução literal combinada com amplificação provaram ser ferramentas valiosas. Estes métodos, quando habilmente aplicados, não só transmitem a essência original destas antigas expressões literárias chinesas, mas também entrelaçam habilmente a sabedoria dos clássicos antigos com as ideologias de governação contemporâneas. Esta fusão transmite eficazmente as riquezas culturais profundamente

enraizadas da herança clássica da China, permitindo a comunicação intercultural e facilitando o alcance político. Em essência, a tradução de literatura política funciona como uma ponte intrincada, conectando as complexidades da história e da cultura chinesas com o mundo moderno, cumprindo assim o duplo propósito de intercâmbio cultural e comunicação política. Num mundo em rápida globalização, esta tradução matizada torna-se cada vez mais essencial, moldando a percepção da China e promovendo a cooperação e a compreensão internacionais.

Palavras-chave: Cultivo Moral; Estratégia de tradução; Tradução de publicidade externa

1 Introduction

From ancient times up to now, moral cultivation is what the statesmen, scholars attach importance to the moral character in our traditional culture. No matter the ancient monarch or the leader of modern society, they must follow the principle of having both virtue and ability, and putting morality first in the selection and employment mechanism. To be a great person needs moral character, to be a great politician needs official ethics, and to run a country needs to have core values internalized in the heart and externalized in practice. Therefore, no matter from the perspective of personal development, social progress or national prosperity, a person must be virtuous first, and then may have the opportunity to achieve development and progress at all levels, from individual to national.

This paper selected the core values of socialism in the new era of “moral cultivation” as the theme, with a series of important discourse on “moral cultivation” and its English

translation in *Xi Jinping's Classics* as the corpus, such as “德者，本也”，“国有四维，礼义廉耻，‘四维不张，国乃灭亡’”，“大学之道，在明明德，在亲民，在止于至善”. This paper explored the translation strategies of Chinese classical poetry with the theme of “moral cultivation” from the following three perspectives: the instinct of “moral cultivation” -- to worship morality: “德者，本也”. The origin of “moral cultivation” -- to illuminate morality: “大学之道，在明明德，在亲民，在止于至善”. The approach of “moral cultivation” -- to cultivate morality: “从善如登，从恶如崩”.

This is a perfect model of the integration of Chinese ancient traditional moral thoughts and modern social and scientific governance of civilization. The analysis of the corresponding English translation version has great strategic significance to inject Chinese characteristics into world English, construct a discourse system with Chinese characteristics, and enhance cultural confidence.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Political publicity translation

Political literature is an important external publicity material, which is characterized by standard wording and rigorous structure. As an official channel of external publicity, political literature is an authoritative window to convey and

implement the major policies of the Party and the State. The realization of correct external publicity plays a positive role.

The translation of external publicity is a job that requires the translator to have a high sense of responsibility and a keen sense of politics. The translation of political documents has its particularity. In addition to following the basic translation principles of “faithfulness, openness and elegance”, the translation of political documents also needs to follow the principles of “three approaches to external publicity” (Huang, 2004), that is, close to the reality of China's development, close to foreign audiences' demands for Chinese information, and close to the thinking habits of foreign audiences.

2.2 An overview of translation theories

Different nations create different languages, and different languages contain different cultural backgrounds. Translation is a bridge between two different languages (Peter 1988). According to the communicative translation theory, the target text should be centered on the readers of the target language, and different translation methods should be adopted according to the nature of the text, so that the target text can have the same reading effect on the readers of the target language as the source text does on the readers of the source language (Jin, 2002). Skopos theory insists that the purpose of translation determines the approach taken by the target text (Zhang, 2004). When the cultural phenomena contained in the source language

cannot be directly transformed through the surface of the text, the transmission of cultural factors is involved. When analyzing text types and choosing different translation methods, the analysis of cultural factors should not be ignored. Especially when it comes to language expressions with national characteristics and related cultural background knowledge, “language, culture and translation” should be organically combined, so that the information of the source language can be accurately conveyed and the target language readers can successfully comprehend the ideological connotation of the source language, which is the core content of cultural translation theory. The translators Bassnett and Lefevere’s translation research not only focuses on the differences at the language level, but also focuses on the differences in the underlying cultural factors. They should explore the interaction between the source language, the target language, the author, the translator and the readers from a comprehensive cultural perspective (Bassnett & Lefevere, 2001). Translation activities not only involve the conversion between two languages, but also the collision and communication between two different cultures represented by translation activities, which is a typical cross-cultural communication (Huang, 2010).

2.3 Translation Strategies of Chinese Classical Poetry on Theme of “Moral Cultivation”

After systematically combing the discussion on the theme of “moral cultivation” in Xi

Jinping’s Classics and carefully comparing the corresponding English translations, we find that the translation strategies of Chinese classical poetry of “moral cultivation” are flexible and diverse, including literal translation, literal translation plus free translation, literal translation plus omission etc., which are discussed and analyzed in detail below.

(1) Literal Translation Strategy to Spread Original Chinese Culture

On Oct. 21, 2013, Xi delivered a speech at the 100th anniversary celebration of the Western Returned Scholars Association, when talking about creating a favorable environment for overseas students to work back home. He quoted the “尚贤者，政之本也” (p.61), which means that the sage is the foundation of politics. The word “尚” means exaltation and promotion, which corresponds to the phrase “exaltation of” in the translated text. The translator adopts the literal translation method and translates it as: Exaltation of the virtuous is fundamental to governance. The translated sentence is composed of subject + verb + predicative, which is familiar to the readers of target language. Thus, the translation conforms to the reading habit of target readers, and accurately conveys to the target language readers the ruling idea of highlighting talents when dealing with the employment of returnees.

In December 2017, Xi cited an ancient poem: “夫孝，德之本也。” (p.344) in his discussion on Making the People Have more

sense of gain, happiness and security to promote respect and care for the elderly. The translator also adopts the literal translation method and translates it as: "Filial piety is the root of morality" (p.398). The translation adopts the same sentence structure of "Subject + linked verb + predicative" as the original poem, which conforms to the reading habit of the target language readers and meets the translation requirement of "closing to the reading habit of the target language readers" advocated by Huang (2002) in the three principles of external publicity translation. Therefore, this translation not only fully conveys the specific content and form of the original poem, which not only advocated Xu's requirements of "beauty in form" and "beauty in meaning" in the translation of ancient texts, but also disseminates to the readers of the target language the connotation of the traditional Chinese culture behind the classics and conforms to the cultural translation concepts of Bassnett and Lefevere (2001), which is conducive to cross-cultural communication. Present Xi quoted the current ancient Chinese poem to promote the traditional social virtues of filial piety to respect and care for the elderly.

In November 2018, Xi Jinping delivered a speech titled *Achieving Better Development of Hong Kong and Macao while Integrating Them into the Overall Development of the Country* and quoted an ancient poem: "恩德相结者，谓之知己；腹心相照者，谓之知心。" (p.398) when meeting with a delegation from various sectors of Hong Kong and Macao to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the country's reform

and opening-up. On the basis of in-depth understanding of the original poetry, the translator also adopts the literal translation method, which translates it as: "People drawn to each other by kindness and virtues make good friends; people who hold together with a meeting of minds make bosom friends" (p.462). Through analyzing the translated version, we find that the translated text completely conveys the specific content of the original poem and continues the pattern of the compound sentence structure of the original poem. It accords with beauty requirements of "beauty in form" and "beauty in meaning" in the translation of ancient literature (Xu, 2006). In addition, both the translated text and the original poem are composed of the sentence structure of "subject + predicate verb + object" familiar to target language readers, which conforms to the reading habits of target language readers and meets the translation requirements of "being close to the reading habits of target language readers" in the three principles of external promotion translation advocated by Huang (2002).

At a meeting of the joint group of members of the Cultural and Art circles and the Social Sciences in March 2019, Xi Jinping called for writers, artists and social scientists to lead by virtue in their creations, quoting an ancient sentence: "太上有立德，其次有立功，其次有立言。" (p.325) The current ancient prose quoted from 《左传·襄公二十四年》 (zuo zhuan· xiang gong er shi si nian) written by historian 左丘明 (Zuo Qiuming) to explain Confucius' Spring and Autumn Annals, which is regarded as one of the Thirteen Classics of

Confucianism. It is the first fully narrated chronicle history book in ancient China, and a representative of pre-Qin prose works. This classic means that the highest goal of life is to establish virtue, the second is to establish achievements, and the third is to write books and theories. Virtue, merit and speech are closely related to each other. Virtue is the basic premise of meritorious service and speech, which are the natural results of virtue. Although Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism differ in the expression of their main tenets, they all take morality as the foundation. "Virtue" is the core concept of Chinese culture. Its original meaning is to follow our own nature, conform to the way of nature, and highlight the value of human relations. To be specific, "Virtue" includes benevolence, integrity, gentleness, respect, comity, modesty and other good characters.

On the basis of accurately understanding the ideological connotation of the original prose, the translator adopts the literal translation method to translate it as: "The highest attainment is to exemplify virtue; the second highest is to perform great deeds; the third highest is to put forth noble ideas; The third highest is to put forth noble ideas" (p.379). The first "其次" refers to the second highest, corresponding to "the second highest" in the translation; the second "其次" refers to the third highest, corresponding to "the third highest" in the translation. "立德" is literally translated as "to exemplify virtue", "立功" as "to perform great deeds", and "立言" corresponds to the translation "to put forth noble ideas", achieving the unity of the original

prose and the translation in the parts of speech and meaning. In line with Xu's translation requirements of "beauty in form" and "beauty in meaning" in the translation of ancient texts (Xu, 2004). This translation not only fully conveys the specific content of the original prose to the readers of the target language, but also disseminates the philosophical thoughts behind this classic, conforming to the cultural translation views of Bassnett and Lefevere (2001).

(2) Literal Translation + Free Translation Methods to Convey the Meaning of Ancient Texts Flexibly

In a symposium with outstanding youth representatives from all walks of life on Youth Day in 2013, Xi Jinping called on contemporary youth to always maintain a positive attitude towards life and good moral character. He quoted the ancient sentence "从善如登，从恶如崩" (p. 53) from the State · Zhou Yu, which literally means that the path to good is as hard as climbing a mountain, but the path to evil is as fast as a landslide. The translator adopts the method of free translation and translates it as: "Virtue uplifts, while vice debases." (p.57) The nouns "virtue" and "vice" in their translation refer to "善" and "恶" in their source languages, the verbs "登" and "崩" correspond to "uplift" and "debase" in their translation. The four-character expression in the original is concise and the translation also adopts the sentence structure of "subject + predicate" which is

familiar to the target language readers, with “while” added in the middle, connecting the two compound sentences, forming a turning relationship, indicating to the target language readers the different development paths to be experienced in the different behaviors of good and evil. Namely, the path of “moral cultivation” and the completely different results it brings. This kind of translation not only retains the specific content of the original text, but also conveys the profound cultural connotation behind it to the target language readers.

On following year of Youth Day in 2014, Xi Jinping said at a seminar with teachers and students at Peking University that only when a country and a nation share the same core values can they work together for the big goal of national rejuvenation and national prosperity and quoted the ancient expression: “大学之道，在明明德，在亲民，在止于至善” (p.168), which originated from Reading Notes · University, which literally means that the way of governing the country is to promote the noble virtue and moral administration, get close to the people, observe the public opinion, and pursue the supreme good for the people. The English version is: “The way to great learning is to manifest bright virtue and to treat the people as one’s own family, thereby arriving at supreme goodness (p.187).

Through the analysis of the original text and the translation, we find that the translation and the original text are both composed of the sentence structure of “subject + linked verb + predicative” familiar to the target language readers, which conforms to the reading habits

of target language readers and meets the translation requirements of “closing to the reading habits of target language readers” advocated by Huang (2004) in the three principles of external publicity translation. In ancient times, “大学” is about the knowledge of state affairs and security, corresponding to “great learning” in the translation. “道” means the method and the way, which is literally translated as “the way to”. “明明德”, the first “明” as a verb, means to promote and carry forward, corresponding to the “manifest” in the translation; the second “明” as an adjective, means “bright” in the translation. “在亲民” is translated freely as “treat the people as one’s own family”, from the attitude towards the people to reflect the characteristics of affinity to the people. “止于” means stopping doing something when the goal is achieved. “止于至善” means we will not stop learning until arriving at supreme goodness. Therefore, the translation not only fully conveys the specific content of the original text but also achieves the unity with the original text in terms of sentence pattern, part of speech and meaning, which conforms to the translation requirements of “beauty in form” and “beauty in meaning” that Xu (2006) advocated in ancient Chinese translation. The purpose of the current expression quoted by Xi Jinping is to call on the youth to pursue the perfection of virtue and beauty, and the communist Party members to carry forward the noble virtue and political morality, get close to the people and observe the public opinion. Therefore, this ancient book adopts the translation strategy of literal translation and free translation, which not only

conforms to the reading habits of the target language readers, but also conveys the rich cultural connotation behind the classic expression, namely the origin of “morality”.

(3) The Use of Literal Translation + Amplification to Enrich the Connotation of the Ancient Text

On May 4, 2014, Xi Jinping delivered a speech entitled *the Youth to Consciously Practice the Socialist Core Values*, when he cited the following two ancient sentences. The first one is “四维不张，国乃灭亡(p.168)”. Among them, “四维” that is “four dimensions” which refers to “propriety, righteousness, integrity and shame”. The first two are the fundamental code of conduct in a society and “integrity and shame” is a person’s basic moral bottom line. “Propriety, righteousness, integrity and shame” are the four basic elements to maintain the normal operation of the society. If these four principles cannot be obeyed by the citizens, the country will be easily destroyed. For the translation of this sentence, the translator adopts the method of literal translation + amplification translation method: “Prosperity, righteousness, honesty and a sense of shame - the four anchors of our moral foundation, and a question of life and death for the country.” (p.187) The translator literally translated “四维” as “propriety, righteousness, integrity and shame”.

In terms of part of speech and meaning, this translation has reached the unity with the original one, which is in line with the

translation requirements of “beauty in form” and “beauty in meaning” that Xu advocated in ancient Chinese translation (2006). Additionally, the translation adds the phrase of “the four anchors of our moral foundation” to indicate the function of “propriety, righteousness, integrity and shame”. By using the word “anchors” to map the anchor of the ship to the moral integrity of society and person, which is the moral bottom line and moral constraint of the society and individual. President Xi quoted the line to emphasize the bottom-line role of “propriety, righteousness, integrity and shame” in social development and personal progress.

In the same speech, he also quoted a famous saying of educationist and thinker CAI Yuanpei in the period of the Republic of China : “若无德，则虽体魄智力发达，适足助其为恶” (p.173), which literally means that if a person does not possess the basic moral qualities, then even his strong body and high IQ will only be an accomplice to harm others and society. For the translation of this sentence, the translator adopts the method of literal translation + amplification translation method: “He who is strong physically and talented but has no virtue will end up on the side of vice” (p.192). The translator adopts this literal + amplification translation method, adding the subject “he”, followed by an attributive clause guided by “who”, which further explains the identity of the subject and aims to emphasize the following consequence originated from. President Xi quoted this ancient poem to emphasize the important role of “virtue” in one’s life, which is the direction and guiding

light for one's success. Without basic morality, even the best of men will lose their way and lead to destruction.

To sum up, through literal translation, the translated text can convey the original content of the source language, so as to help the target language readers to obtain the reading effect similar to that of the readers of the source language. In the translated text, the selection of words should be consistent with the words of the original text as far as possible, and the style of the original text should be followed, so that the translated text should reflect both "beauty in form" and "beauty in meaning" (Xu, 2006). Under the guidance of communicative translation theory, translators flexibly use literal translation + free translation or literal translation + amplification to make the translation more in line with the reading habits of target readers by adding subject or conjunction to the target language, which is conducive to the implementation of cross-cultural communication.

3 Conclusion

From the perspective of cultural translation, this paper summarizes the translation strategies of political literature reflecting the thought of "virtue", starting from the original intention, the source and the way of virtue, so as to achieve the perfect combination of classical cultural elements, ruling thoughts and humanistic ideas in the new era. The research finds that the translation methods adopted in the translation are flexible and diverse, including

literal translation, literal translation plus free translation, literal translation plus amplification. These translation methods not only retain the linguistic expression characteristics and cultural traditions of the source language, but also conform to the reading habits and ways of thinking of Western readers. Through the study of the ancient translation of "virtue" embodied in the current political literature, it not only spreads the wisdom of China's ancient civilization to the readers of the target language, which is conducive to cross-cultural communication, but also spreads the core socialist values in the new era to the international community, which helps the excellent Chinese culture to go out and achieve the political purpose of effective external publicity.

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