

A study on the Metaphor Translation in Xi Jinping: The Governance of China from the Perspective of Functional Equivalence Theory

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Abstract. Metaphors are frequently used in Chinese political discourses to express complex meanings and specify abstract ideas for better public perception. Therefore, strategies used in translating these metaphors can directly affect western readers' understanding of Chinese political thoughts and ideas. Xi Jinping: Governance of China collected speeches, and talks scripts of Xi Jinping since 2012. It epitomizes Chinese political discourses and offers a wide range of metaphors in Chinese political settings. This study aims to explore translation strategies used in metaphors in Xi Jinping: Governance of China under the perspective of Functional Equivalence Theory. After identifying the major metaphors with the method of MIP (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) based on the SISU online bilingual corpus, the author classifies these metaphors as journey metaphors, engineering metaphors, war metaphors, plant metaphors, illness metaphors, etc. Then, the author analyzes translation strategies used within and discusses how translation guided by these strategies helps readers of the target language achieve a similar or even the same response as the reader of the source text. In the end, three translation strategies are proposed: translating into the same metaphor in the target language, replacing metaphor in the source text with metaphor in the target text, and Translating metaphors into non-metaphorical expression.

Keywords: Metaphor translation; Xi Jinping: Governance of China; Functional Equivalence Theory; translation strategies.

1. Introduction

A metaphor is a common linguistic device to familiarize people with uncommon and abstract ideas or concepts. It utilizes shared intuitive life experiences, common sense, and social consensus to explain thoughts, construct values and persuade people. Therefore, metaphors are frequently used in political talks, election speeches, and published books for political purposes.

A variety of metaphors are also used in Chinese political discourses. A case in point is Xi Jinping: The Governance of China, a compilation of Xi's major works, including interviews, speeches, talks, and instructions. Metaphors frequently showed up in these texts and some of which are with distinctive Chinese characteristics. They carry out Xi's important political ideas and values with abundant cultural, traditional, and unique connotations and implications. Therefore, the translation of metaphors in these political discourses proves to be significant, as only accurate and quality translation can convey the precise meaning and largely avoid potential misunderstandings.

Given this, the study on metaphor translation is important in terms of guiding correct translation and assessing the impact of different translation strategies. Previous studies on metaphor translation in Xi Jinping: The Governance of China have accomplished great achievements from various perspectives. Dou (2018) analyzed strategies adopted from the perspective of the working mechanism of Conceptual Metaphor [1]. Ren (2018) studied the rhetorical impacts on metaphor translation from the perspective of Rhetorical Persuasion [2]. Zhang (2019) studied metaphor translation in the diplomatic chapter of the book and find three major translation strategies: literal translation, free translation, and omission [3]. Chen and Jian (2019) specifically explored the humanity and working mechanism of metaphors in science and technology employed in this book and corresponding translation strategies [4]. Liang (2020) studied the mechanism of political metaphor from the perspective of the Social Practice Network [5]. Previous literature focuses mainly on the summary of translation strategies either in a certain realm or from a certain framework, few have studied metaphor

translation from the perspective of readers or audience and their response to the translation. Therefore, it is also necessary and with great importance to study how readers in the target language perceive these translations, as their responses and comprehension of these translations can also assess the quality and impact of translation.

To find the reader's response, this study adopts the Functional equivalence theory of Nida to analyze the translation strategies employed in Xi Jinping: The governance of China and their impact on the audience in the target language in a qualitative manner. The study will first identify major metaphors by complying MIP (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) [6] mechanism based on a SISU online bilingual corpus [7] of the full text of this book. Then, the author analyzes translation strategies used within and discusses how these strategies shape and change the translation, and how readers of the target language would receive a similar or even equivalent response as the reader of the source language. Discussion on the perception of the target audience help translators understands the potential problems that they may encounter and offer more practical guidance on metaphor translation in political discourse. This study is believed to deepen the translation study in this specific field and help improve the quality of metaphor translation, thus facilitating cross-cultural communication in the long run.

2. Methodology

This study is conducted through Xi Jinping: The Governance of China online corpus platform [7] with the aid of MIP (metaphor identification procedure).

The author would first access text from speeches in ChapterIvia Xi Jinping: The Governance of China online corpus platform, and then identify and extract metaphors from these texts. Identifying metaphors has long been a challenge due to the lack of a widely accepted scientific method. However, MIP put forward by the Pragglejaz group in 2007 offered a solution, which provides four steps to identify metaphors:

Step1 Read through the whole passage or sentence to generate a general idea of its meaning

Step2 Determine each lexical unit

Step3 Look at each lexical unit

(a) ascertain the meaning in the given text

(b) determine the original meaning and establish its contextual meaning in the given text. Then establish whether the original meaning of the word is significantly different from its contextual meaning.

(c) determine whether the contextual meaning of the word is associated with the original meaning with some similarities but can be understood.

Step4 Mark the lexical unit as a metaphorical expression

The author would classify these metaphors based on their types in the source domain in the process of identifying and analyzing how this metaphor is translated into the specific context under the framework of Functional Equivalence Theory.

3. The Function Equivalence Theory

The Functional Equivalence Theory put forward by Eugene A. Nida mainly emphasizes the notion of equivalence and the receptor's response. The notion of equivalence can be described that the target text should be the "closest natural equivalence" to the source text information [8]. The translated text should be complied with the source text linguistically to be readable and understandable to the target reader [9]. Because language form also conveys meaning and translators should keep the language in the same pattern to the fullest. But given that languages differ greatly in grammar and linguistic forms, adjustments are also accepted to achieve meaning equivalence [10].

As for the receptor's response, Nida primarily takes the response of the receptor into comparison, which is different from the mere traditional textual comparison between translation and source text

[11]. Nida believes that the receptor's response to the translated text with the receptor's response to the source text. And receptors of the target text can comprehend and perceive the translated text in the same way as the readers of the source text do [12].

4. Metaphors in Xi Jinping: The Governance of China

4.1 Journey Metaphor

The journey metaphor refers to that compares objects with a journey. In common sense, a journey has several basic characteristics, starting point, a process of moving, and an ending point. Therefore, journeys can be used to cover related concepts, such as process, a path to the destination, a tool used for travel, etc. In Xi Jinping: The governance of China, the most frequently used journey metaphors are as follows: "道路" "征程" "方向".

4.2 Engineering Metaphor

Engineering metaphor is another widely-used metaphor in Xi Jinping: The governance of China. Engineering refers to the construction of a building, buildings, builders, etc. The use of engineering metaphors can visualize the process or the status of a certain object. It can be used to portray the role a certain object is playing or whether it is under construction. Common engineering metaphors include: "根基" "桥梁" and "支柱".

4.3 War Metaphor

Wars happened when conflicts escalate and can no longer be solved through negotiation. Past wars have exerted a long-lasting influence on human beings. Wars require overall preparation, strategic and exquisite plans, high-end equipment and weapons, and real fight. The use of war metaphors implies an urgent situation or a state of tension over the issue. People can generate a similar feeling of nerve or tension from war metaphors, as they can be triggered by war-related images. Common war metaphors are "斗争" "战争" and "旗帜".

4.4 Plant Metaphor

Plants are closely associated with human everyday life and have a deep impact on people's basic idea of life experience. Plants produce oxygen for species to breathe, and they also absorb sunlight and generate food, vegetable, and other basic supply for human survival. Therefore, people have a broad sense of plants in terms of its root, growth, living environment, and fruits. Due to people's familiarity with plants, they can form a relationship between the original meaning and the metaphorical meaning. Plant metaphors used in Xi Jinping: The Governance of China include "树木" and "土壤".

4.5 Illness Metaphor

Illnesses are common human physical problems that involve many parts of the human body, including certain organs or human body, or a type of disease. People would gain fast and intuitive experience from illness metaphors as they could be awakened to the suffering experience of being ill or they can relate the symptoms to their own past experiences. Illness metaphor can link the object with the real problem embodied and reveal the hidden logic of the problem. Common illness metaphors that appear in the book are: "痛" "病" and "症".

5. Analysis of Metaphor Translation from the Perspective of Functional Equivalence Theory

5.1 Translating into the Same Metaphor in the Target Language

Example 1:

Source text: 人民军队在中国特色强军之路上迈出坚定步伐.

English translation: The people's armed forces have taken solid strides on the path of building a powerful military with Chinese characteristics.

In this sentence, the journey metaphor "强军之路" is directly translated into "the path of building a powerful military". The author adopts the same metaphor in translation as the one in the source text, which compares the process of building a powerful military as a path to move forward. This direct usage of source metaphor in translation keeps the original image and meaning in the source text, which enables target readers to understand people's armed forces are ready and fully prepared to make the military a more powerful one. The same metaphor allows the target language reader to comprehend equivalent information in the source text.

Example 2:

Source text: 紧紧依靠人民创造历史伟业, 使我们党的根基永远坚如磐石.

English translation: We should rely closely on them to create historic achievements, so as to make the foundation of our Party rock-solid.

In this example, "党的根基" is translated into "the foundation of our Party", which achieves both the information and form equivalence to the source text. This translation allows target readers to understand that people are the core and very essence of China's Communist Party. Therefore, comparing people as the foundation of the Party not only explicitly explains the fundamental role people play in the relationship between them and the Party, but also offers the target reader the perspective of the source text, which visualizes people's significance to the Party. In this case, target readers can gain almost the same response as the source text readers.

Example 3:

Source text: 保持中国—东盟友谊之树长青, 必须夯实双方关系的社会土壤.

English translation: To ensure that the tree of China - ASEAN friendship remains evergreen, the soil of social support for our relations should be fertile.

In this example, "友谊之树长青" is translated into "the tree of China - ASEAN friendship remains evergreen". The translator doesn't change the source text metaphor in order to provide readers in the target language with the same reading experience. Comparing the China - ASEAN relationship with a tree that remains evergreen is vivid and intuitive. It maps the abstract relationship into people's common life experiences of plants to tell the audience that China - ASEAN is as prosperous and positive as a vigorous growing tree. This metaphor translation has brought the audience reader the same feeling as the source language reader and achieved a high level of information equivalence at the same time.

5.2 Replacing Metaphor in the Source Text into Metaphor in the Target Text

Example 4:

Source text: 发展中国特色社会主义是一项长期的艰巨的历史任务, 必须准备进行具有许多新的历史特点的伟大斗争.

English translation: Developing Chinese socialism is a long-term arduous task of historic importance, and that we must be prepared for a great struggle with many new historic features.

In this example, "伟大斗争" would originally mean "a great fight" or "a worth-noting war". However, this would not be the most precise meaning that the source text conveys. To achieve the equivalent effect of the source text, the translator changes the source metaphor and instead uses a different word "struggle", as in this context, developing Chinese socialism is a challenging task to accomplish rather than an enemy to fight with. "Struggle" emphasize the difficulty and hardship we

need to encounter to realize Chinese socialism. Therefore, changing the original metaphor with one in the target language makes the target readers appreciate the closest meaning in the source text and receive the same response as the source readers do.

Example 5:

Source text: 着重完善党内政治生活等各方面制度, 压缩消极腐败现象生存空间和滋生土壤.

English translation: improve the mechanisms of internal Party political activities and conduct, leave no room for misconduct and corruption.

In this context, the translator did not translate "滋生土壤" as "soil for the corruption". Instead, the phrase was translated as "room for misconduct and corruption". The source text stresses the policy for combating corruption. If the metaphor was directly kept as "soil", the target reader may not be able to understand its relationship with corruption. Therefore, translating this metaphor as "room" achieves the highest functional equivalence in transferring the message to "aggressively combat corruption to ensure its less occurrence". Changing metaphors allows target readers to have a clear understanding of information.

Example 6:

Source text: 我们党领导人民进行革命建设改革, 就是要让中国人民富裕起来.

English translation: The very purpose of the Party in leading the Chinese people in revolution, development, and reform is to make the people prosperous and the country strong.

In this example, "革命建设改革" is not translated as "revolution, building, and reform". Instead, it is translated into "revolution, development, and reform". In this context, the original engineering metaphor "建设" does not convey the original meaning of "building or constructing", but rather means the improvement of revolution and making progress along the way. Due to different language collocation, the target reader might be confused if the phrase was put as "building", as revolution cannot be built anyway. Therefore, to achieve functional equivalence, the translator changes the original metaphor with "development", which better interprets the source text's meaning and makes the target reader put less effort to understand.

5.3 Translating Metaphor into Non-metaphorical Expression

Example 7:

Source text: 思想不解放, 我们就很难看清各种利益固化的症结所在.

English translation: If the mind is not freed we can hardly see the crux of our problems with the interest groups.

In this example, "症结" originally means the cause of disease. However, this context emphasizes that a narrow mind would lead to difficulty to sort out where the problem with the interest group is. In this case, if the metaphor was directly translated into "the root for the disease", target readers would fail to understand the core meaning of it but struggle with the relationship between disease and interest group. Therefore, to achieve the highest equivalence, the translator abandoned the original metaphor and translated it into a non-metaphorical expression "crux of problems". In this case, target readers would accept the equivalent information without extra effort.

Example 8:

Source text: 要不断增强向体内病灶开刀的自觉性.

English translation: We should constantly enhance our will to tackle deep-rooted problem.

In this example, the ill metaphor "病灶开刀" originally should be translated into "make operation on the lesions". However, the source text is not talking about emergency surgery but rather emphasizes the proactiveness and importance to face and solve the core problems. Therefore, if the translator kept the source metaphor, then it would not be easy for the target audience to understand the real contextual meaning of it. Therefore, the translation "tackle deep-rooted problem" removes the original metaphor and phrases it as a more understandable non-metaphorical expression, which

allows the target readers to attain equivalent information and receive the same response to the source information.

Example 9:

Source text: 要设定时间表, 实现有序退出, 既要防止拖延病, 又要防止急躁症.

English translation: We should set a timetable, a step-by-step schedule to complete this poverty relief program, being neither over-conservative nor over-impetuous.

In this example, the illness metaphors "拖延症" and "急躁症" can be translated as "procrastination" and "irritable syndrome" if the translation complies with the source metaphor. However, the given context is stressing that the poverty relief program should neither be completed too slowly nor too radically. Therefore, to achieve information functional equivalence, the translator did not take the original metaphor but changed it with "neither over - conservative nor over - impetuous", a non-metaphorical expression, to describe the step and pace they required. In this way, the target audience would be able to appreciate the metaphorical meaning or source text effectively without any confusion, and a high level of information equivalence and the same reader response would be generated.

6. Conclusion

This study has categorized the major metaphors used in Xi Jinping: The Governance of China into five categories: journey metaphors, engineering metaphors, war metaphors, plant metaphors, illness metaphors, etc. After analyzing the translation strategies used in these metaphors, three general strategies could be generated to translate metaphors in the future: translating into the same metaphor in the target language, replacing metaphor in the source text into metaphor in the target text, and translating metaphors into non-metaphorical expression. As metaphors are diverse in linguistic form and loaded with cultural implications, it is not applicable to offer a one-size-fits-all solution to all metaphor translations. But at least, the examples given above could offer a reference as to how target readers may perceive translation from their language perspective, which can offer guidance on the future translation of metaphors, especially in political setting texts.

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