

# ON CULTURAL TRANSLATION STRATEGIES FOR CLASSICAL LITERATURE CONCERNING THE IDEOLOGY OF PEOPLE-CENTERED: A CASE STUDY OF *XI JINPING THE GOVERNANCE OF CHINA II*

## SOBRE ESTRATÉGIAS DE TRADUÇÃO CULTURAL PARA A LITERATURA CLÁSSICA SOBRE A IDEOLOGIA CENTRADA NO POVO: UM ESTUDO DE CASO DE *XI JINPING THE GOVERNANCE OF CHINA II*

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connotations in classical poems in order to achieve intercultural communication and international political publicity.

**Keywords:** Xi Jinping the Governance of China II. Cultural Translation Perspective. Political Document. Translation Strategy. The Ideology for erve the people.

**Resumo:** Como uma parte importante da tradução de publicidade internacional, a tradução de documentos políticos é a porta para a comunidade internacional aprender sobre as políticas domésticas e externas da China. Este artigo analisou as estratégias de tradução cultural para os poemas clássicos sobre “People-Centered” aplicados na versão em inglês de Xi Jinping on the Governance of China II do ponto de vista da perspectiva cultural. Uma vez que os estudos de tradução política não devem focar apenas nas diferenças de linguagem, mas também na conotação cultural e na implicação política veiculada. A pesquisa mostra que a tradução literal, a tradução literal mais aditiva e a tradução literal mais livre podem ser aplicadas para transmitir as ricas

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conotações culturais em poemas clássicos, a fim de alcançar a comunicação intercultural e a publicidade política internacional.

**Palavras-chave:** Xi Jinping. A Governança da China II. Perspectiva da Tradução Cultural. Documento Político. Estratégia de Tradução. A Ideologia para servir o povo.

## Introduction

### The Background of the Study

With the increasing improvement of China's comprehensive national strength, China's political, economic, cultural and other fields have developed rapidly, which has attracted the close attention of the society at home and abroad. *Xi Jinping the Governance of China II* is a classic work that embodies the governance principles and development concepts of Party and state leaders with Xi Jinping as the core since the 18th National Congress of the CPC (Dou Weilin 2016). It is an important document that publicizes China's current major policies and policies to the international community and disseminates China's traditional culture.

### The Importance of the Study

The quality of political document translation influences the effect of intercultural communication, and also has a great influence on improving the international discourse power of a country and establishing the international image effectively. Through ancient poems centered on the thought of "People-Centered", this study explores their English translation strategies and investigates how the translation accurately conveys the cultural connotation and essence of these ancient poems to the target readers, so as to achieve a perfect combination of classical cultural elements with the ruling ideology and humanistic ideas in the new era.

## 1. Literature Review

### The research history on the translation of *Xi Jinping the Governance of China II*

As *Xi Jinping the Governance of China II* is a very important political document and publicity carrier. At present, foreign scholars have mainly discussed its governing concept and ideological connotation. The translation research of this document is mainly carried out by domestic scholars in the following aspects: First, translation strategy research (Wang

& Xu 2019; Zhao 2020); Second, the study on the communication mode of external publicity (Dou 2016; Xia 2017); Third, the study of the translator's subjectivity (Zhang 2019; Guo 2019); Fourth, research on characteristic words (Liu 2019); Fifth, the study of para-text (Shu 2018); Sixth, the study of analogy and rhetoric (Xu 2019; Hong 2019). It can be seen that domestic scholars rarely study the translation of ancient Chinese poems centered on a specific political thought in *Xi Jinping's the Governance of China*. This paper will take *Xi Jinping's the Governance of China* as the research material, and explore the translation strategies of Xi Jinping's ideology of "People-Centered" in the corresponding English version of the second volume. Through study the translation of ancient Chinese poems centered on the ideology of "People-Centered", it will deepen the world's understanding of views on political achievements held by the Chinese government, that is the greatest achievement is to benefit the people, so as to improve the international image of China as a service-oriented government.

### **The nature of political document translation**

As an official channel of external publicity, China's political documents disseminate national policies and principles to the international community, which reflect the will of the Party and the state and represent the fundamental interests of the people. At the same time, it serves as an authoritative window for the international community to know about China's national conditions, policies and political positions. Political documents are important publicity materials, which have the characteristics of standard wording, rigorous structure, careful logic. From the second volume of *Xi Jinping the Governance of China*, it is not difficult to find that when expressing the thought of "People-Centered", General Secretary Xi Jinping often makes witty remarks and frequently quotes the ancient poems from Chinese classics and historical books. Translation of these classic words and sentences is of great significance to the dissemination of our traditional culture and the enhancement of the effect of external publicity.

### **The principles of political document translation**

The translation of political documents requires the translator to have a high sense of responsibility and a keen political consciousness. The translation is supposed to follow the three important principles of "closing 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 of Chinese political documents. What is more, as it is classical poetry, it should also meet the translation requirements of “beauty in meaning, beauty in sound and beauty in form” to enable target readers to have similar aesthetic sense of reading as source readers (Xu 2006).

## 2. Methodology

As the study aims to identify the translation strategies of ancient Chinese poems centered on the ideology of “People-Centered”. 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 methods applied in the Xi’s works.

### Data collection

The current study aims to explore and analyze the application of translation strategies and the translation thinking patterns reflected in translation of ancient Chinese poems centered on the ideology of “Serve for the people”, it is from this particular perspective that the present study takes *Xi Jinping the Governance of China II* and its English version as the research materials to examine the common strategies for the English translation of political documents.

### Focus on Xi Jinping’s ideology of “People-Centered”

On November 15, 2012, when Xi Jinping was elected General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, he solemnly declared for the first time in a meeting with Chinese and foreign journalists at the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the 18th CPC Central Committee: “The people’s aspiration for a better life is our goal.” Thus, the establishment and implementation of the political ideology of “People-Centered” since the 18th National Congress of the CPC has become the theoretical foundation for the steady progress of the work of the Party and the country. The classical Chinese literature in *Xi Jinping the Governance of China II* centered on the ideology of “People-Centered” are mainly

identified according to following three attributes embodied in Xi Jinping's ideology of "People-Centered".

1). The origin -- what is the ideology of "People-Centered". "People-Centered" means to think of the welfare of the people, and it is the criterion for all the work of the CPC. People's subjectivity is the core content and fundamental stand of Marxism. Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the core concept of "the people's position and the people's supremacy" has been strengthened and refined. Adhering to the important thought of governing for the people, our Party defines the relationship between Party members and the people as that between public servants and masters, and takes the solution of problems that affect the vital interests of the people as the premise of all its governance. Xi Jinping has stressed the importance of "Serve for the People" on many occasions, pointing out that only when we do good deeds, do practical things and solve difficult problems for the people can we win the support of the people. For example, the ancient poem of "不患寡而患不均, 不患贫而患不安" whose English version is "He is not concerned lest his people should be poor, but only lest what they have should be ill-appropriated. He is not concerned lest they should be few, but only lest they should be divided against one another" and the poem of "长太息以掩涕兮, 哀民生之多艰" whose English version is "I sigh and cry, how hard life is for my countrymen" both belong to this attribute."

2). The reason -- why uphold the ideology of "People-Centered". Everything achieved by our Party comes from the people. The history proves that without the support of the people, the CPC could not have been born and the cause of the Party and the state could not have flourished. To maintain close ties with the masses is also a fine tradition and the greatest political advantage of our Party. The support of the masses is the life of our party's successful ruling. The ancient poem of "得众则得国, 失众则失国" with its English translation "Win popular support, and you win the country; lose it, and you will lose the country" and the ancient poem of "政之所兴在顺民心, 政之所废在逆民心" with its English translation "Decrees may be followed if they are in accordance with the aspirations of the people; they may be ineffective if they are against the aspirations of the people" embody the reason why we should hold the ideology of "People-Centered".

3). The way -- how to implement the ideology of "People-Centered". To achieve the goal of "People-Centered", we must take the people first and put the ideology of "People-

Centered” into practice. Then, we are supposed to take seeking the people’s happiness as the Party’s final goal and always put the people’s interests first. Last, in line with the good will that the fruits of social development should be shared by all the people, steady progress will be made towards the ultimate goal of common prosperity. All principles and policies formulated by the Communist Party of China, as well as all arrangements implemented, should be guided by the purpose of serving the people wholeheartedly. The ancient poem of “老吾老以及人之老，幼吾幼以及人之幼” with its English translation “Do reverence to the elders in your own family and extend it to those in other families; show loving care to the young in your own family and extend it to those in other families.” The ancient poem of “衙斋卧听萧萧竹，疑是民间疾苦声。些小吾曹州县吏，一枝一叶总关情” with its English translation “When I hear the rustles of bamboo leaves outside my study, I feel it is the wails of hungry people; For petty county officials like us, Every concern of the people weighs in our heart” explain the way to implement the ideology of “People-Centered”.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Language contains rich cultural elements. Translation is the bridge between two different languages (Newmark 1988). By carefully reviewing ancient Chinese poems centered on the ideology of “People-Centered” in the second volume of *Xi Jinping the Governance of China*. After a careful comparison of the corresponding English translations, we find that the translation strategies of ancient Chinese poems centered on the ideology of “People-Centered” are flexible and varied, mainly including literal translation, literal plus amplification translation, literal plus free translation, etc., which are analyzed in detail below.

##### (1) Literal translation to convey Chinese elements

The purpose of translation determines the method of translation (Zhang Jinlan 2004). The first consideration of the translation of political documents is to accurately convey the information of the source language to the target language readers, so that the target language readers can receive the same information content as the source language readers. In language translation, literal translation can completely convey the textual information of the source language and help the target language readers to decode it accurately.

On July 1, 2016, the historic moment of the 95th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC), General Secretary Xi Jinping quoted the ancient poem of “得众则得国，失众则失国”(Xi Jinping, 2016:40) at the celebration meeting to express the thought that our Party should always maintain fleshy ties with the people, highlighting the importance of “the people”. The translators apply the literal translation method and translates it as: “Win popular support, and you win the country; lose it, and you will lose the country (Xi Jinping, 2016:40).” The translation uses a semicolon to connect two parallel clauses, which correspond to the antithesis sentence structure of the original poem. The conjunction word “and” used in each clause cleverly links the two main verbs “win” together to form two small compound sentences, which realizes the overlapping of the set of clauses in the clause and continues the language style and antithesis sentence pattern of the source text. In terms of the choice of part of speech, the translator chooses the English antisense verbs “win” and “lose” to correspond to the Chinese antisense verbs “得” and “失” in the source text. Also, the two clauses of translation end with the word “country” respectively, which produces the rhyme effect and has the sound beauty. Through this literal translation, the translator conveys to the target language readers that the success or failure of the Party’s cause and the rise and fall of the country depend on the popularity of the people, so that the readers can better understand the “people’s position” of the Communist Party of China.

On January 8, 2016, Xi Jinping quoted a famous saying in the book *Mencius· King of Lianghui*, which goes: “老吾老以及人之老，幼吾幼以及人之幼” (Xi Jinping, 2016:214), hoping to realize a “great harmony” society as soon as possible. Its English version is: “Do reverence to the elders in your own family and extend it to those in other families; show loving care to the young in your own family and extend it to those in other families (Xi Jinping, 2016:236).” Through careful analysis of the English version, it is not difficult to find that this sentence also uses literal translation. The coordinate structure of the two clauses in the translation corresponds to that of the two clauses in the original poem. It is worth noting that the first Chinese character “老” in the original poem is a verb signifying respect and filial piety, so the verb-object construction of the verb “do” and the noun “reverence” is used in the translation to indicate reverence for the elderly, achieving the unity of part of speech between the original poem and the translation; The second Chinese character “老” in the original poem is a noun, which refers to “the elders in your own

family” ; The third Chinese character “老” in the original poem is also a noun, which refers to “those in other families.” Correspondingly, the first Chinese character “幼” in the original poem is also a verb and it means to love and nurture, which refers to “show loving care” in the translation. The second Chinese character “幼” in the original poem is a noun, which refers to “the young in your own family” ; The third Chinese character “幼” in the original poem is also a noun, which refers to “those in other families”. In this translation, the Chinese and English are unified in part of speech and corresponding in content. Also, the two clauses of translation end with the word “families” respectively, which produces the rhyme effect and realizes the sound beauty. This translation method, which is close to the source text, illustrates to the target language readers the respect and care for the old and the young, which is a fine tradition that every Chinese people should inherit.

The above two ancient poems explain the reasons and ways of “People-Centered” through literal translation method. In terms of content, the translation is completely faithful to the original and accurately conveys the content of the original. It not only accurately explains to English readers the reasons and ways of “People-Centered”, but also profoundly conveys to them the influence of the essence of traditional Chinese culture on the modern idea of governance. In terms of language style, the choice of part of speech of the translated text also keeps the same with that of the original text, and continues the language style and antithesis of the original text. Therefore, both translation conform to the translation requirements of “form beauty”, “meaning beauty” and “sound beauty” advocated by translation expert Xu Yuanchong on the ancient Chinese translation.

(2) Literal translation + additive translation to accurately convey the meaning of the poems

Communicative translation theory holds that the target text should be centered on the target language readers. Different translation methods should be adopted according to the nature of the text in order to produce the same reading effect among the target language readers to achieve the purpose of intercultural communication (Jin 2002). Therefore, on the basis of literal translation, subject or conjunctions can be added appropriately to ensure the integrity of the sentence structure of the translation, which aims to conform to the reading habit of the target language readers. The following two ancient Chinese translations adopt this translation method. By adding subjects, target readers are likely to pass through the context of ancient poem to grasp Chinese poets’ feelings of caring for the people and appreciate the ideology of “Serve for the People”.



On October 15, 2014, Xi Jinping quoted our famous poet Qu Yuan's poem “长太息以掩涕兮，哀民生之多艰”(Xi Jinping, 2016: 317) to express the profound love for the people, which aims to advocate that literary and art workers should adhere to the people-centered creation orientation and express their concern for people's livelihood with exquisite art. Translators apply literal + additive translation method and translate it into: “I sigh and cry, how hard life is for my countrymen (Xi Jinping, 2016: 345).” The first person “I” is added at the beginning of the translation, which cleverly shortens the historical distance between the target language reader and the author of the original poem. After reading this translation, the target language readers may have a chance to be in transposition with the ancient poets of the source language and naturally immerse into the atmosphere of sorrow created by the poets; The subject is followed by two verbs “sigh” and “cry” to interpret the Chinese phrase “太息” and Chinese character “涕” in the source text, which vividly reveal the poet's sadness after seeing the hardship of people's livelihood in ancient times. Finally, a subject clause lead by “how”, a interjection sentence in the target language, is used to express the poet's deep concern over the difficulties of people's livelihood. Therefore, the addition of the subject is in line with the reading habits of the target language readers, and the literal translation subtly conveys the poet's deep concern for the poor people to the target language readers through language transformation, which is conducive to intercultural communication.

In the conference of *A Deeper Understanding of the New Development Concepts* in 2016, Xi pointed out that the concept of sharing essentially means adhering to the concept of people-centered development, which reflects the requirement of gradually realizing common prosperity. In his speech, he quoted Confucius', a representative of the Confucian school in China, a saying, “不患寡而患不均，不患贫而患不安” (Xi Jinping, 2016:214). It was translated as: “He is not concerned lest his people should be poor, but only lest what they have should be ill-appropriated. He is not concerned lest they should be few, but only lest they should be divided against one another.” (Xi Jinping, 2016:236). The translation uses literal+additive translation and adds “he” as the subject, which not only forms a complete sentence pattern of “subject + linking verb + predicative” and conforms to the reading habits of the target language readers, but also points out the identity characteristics of the ruler to the target language readers. The ruler should People-Centered and solve their problems as a public servant. The choice of two compound sentences in the

translation exactly corresponds to the antithesis structure of the source text, which is in line with the “beauty in form” requirement advocated by Xu Yuanchong in the translation of ancient poetry. At the same time, in each short sentence, the conjunction word of “but” corresponds to that of “而” in the source poem, which vividly presents to the target readers the transitional relationship between what the rulers need to worry about for the people and what they do not need to. In this sense, it achieves the requirement of “beauty in meaning” advocated by Xu Yuanchong in the translation of ancient poetry. Through above systematic interpretation of the wisdom of ancient civilization, it clearly conveys to the target readers the great goal of realizing a well-off society in an all-round way in China by the middle of the 21st century, and embodies the ruling concept of common prosperity.

The above two ancient poems explain to the target language readers what is the real “People-Centered” through dialogues with ancient poets across time and space. Under the guidance of communicative translation theory, the translation strategy of literal translation + additive translation should be flexibly applied to make the translation conform to the reading habits of the target language readers, which helps to achieve intercultural communication. The poet not only naturally integrated Western readers into the emotional atmosphere of the poet’s concern for the people, but also vividly conveyed to them the political feelings of our party’s heart for the people.

(3) Literal translation + free translation to flexibly convey the connotation of the poems

Language is a part of culture. Translation activity is a typical cross-cultural communication, involving the collision and communication between two languages and the two cultures they represent (Huang 2010). When there are linguistic and cultural differences, the meaning of some words in the source text is different from the specific purpose expressed by the author of the source language. In addition to literal translation, the translator should carry out free translation on the basis of accurate understanding of the cultural connotation contained in the source text, so as to spread the cultural elements behind the text to the maximum extent and improve the intelligibility of the translation.

In January 2015, Xi quoted a poem written by Zheng Banqiao of Qing Dynasty:“衙斋卧听萧萧竹，疑是民间疾苦声。些小吾曹州县吏，一枝一叶总关情(Xi Jinping, 2015:140)” in order to call on all county Party secretaries at the grassroots level to be officials in the style of Jiao Yulu (Xi Jinping, 2015:140). it was translated as:“When I hear the rustles of bamboo leaves outside my study, I feel it is the wails of hungry people;

For petty county officials like us, Every concern of the people weighs in our heart.” (Xi Jinping, 2015:153) Through analyzing the translated version and the original poem, it is found that “my study” in the translation corresponds to “衙齋”, which refers to the place where Zheng Banqiao worked and studied. “The rustles of bamboo” is used to describe the sound of bamboo in the wind, which corresponds to “萧萧竹”. The literal meaning of “一枝一叶” is the bamboo’s branches and leaves, but in fact it refers to various things that people are concerned about. Therefore, it is not literally translated as “a branch or a leaf”, but translated into “every concern of the people” though a figure of speech.

Through this kind of translation, the poet’s concern for the sufferings of the common people is vividly expressed to the target readers. In the current context, it alludes to the big and small things related to the interests of the people. In this poem, General Secretary Xi Jinping calls on all Party members, especially county Party secretaries at the grass-roots level, to learn from Comrade Jiao Yulu and always bear in mind that their responsibility. It is a good county Party secretary to always People-Centered, think about the people and solve the problems for the people. At the same time, the translation also conveys to the target language readers the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture to the modern ideology of “People-Centered”. No matter it is the ancient county magistrate or the modern county Party secretary, they should uphold the political feelings of loving the people and caring the people.

On September 21, 2014, Xi Jinping quoted from *Guan · Herdsmen* that “政之所兴在顺民心，政之所废在逆民心”(Xi Jinping, 2014:295), explaining that the future and fate of a political party depends on whether it has the support of the people, and the support of the people lies in the direction of policies and the actions of officials. The corresponding English translation is: “Decrees may be followed if they are in accordance with the aspirations of the people; they may be ineffective if they are against the aspirations of the people.”(Xi Jinping, 2014:322) Two conditional adverbial clauses guided by “if” are adopted in the translation, which not only clarify the conditions for the smooth implementation of the policies and regulations issued by the political parties, but also accord with the expression habits of the target language readers. Therefore, the sentence structure of the translation meets the translation requirement of “being close to the reading habits of target language readers” advocated by Huang Youyi in the three principles of external publicity translation.

What is more, “政” in the first sentence actually means “policy”, and is literally translated as “decrees”. The success or failure of the regime is precisely determined by whether a series of policies and decrees can be supported and implemented by the people. Based on a thorough understanding of the content of the original poem, the two main verbs “兴” and “废” in the source language are translated into two phrasal verbs “maybe followed” and “maybe ineffective”, which achieve the unity of part of speech and meaning between the target language and the source language. Therefore, it conforms to the translation requirements of “form beauty” and “meaning beauty” advocated by Xu Yuanchong on the ancient Chinese translation. It is worth noting that “民心” in the source language actually refers to people’s aspirations and hopes, rather than its literal sense of people’s heart, so it was freely translated as “the aspirations of the people”. Therefore, this literal and free translation conveys Xi Jinping’s political idea that all Party members and cadres should take the ideology of “People-Centered” as their greatest achievement concept.

The above two examples of ancient poems respectively illustrate the approach and reason of “People-Centered”, and their translation mainly adopts literal translation and free translation. It not only preserves the language style and expression form of the original poem, but also takes into account the cultural differences of the target language readers, which helps them to understand the feelings of ancient Chinese officials, poets and contemporary government officials who are caring for the people and concerned about the country.

From above examples, cultural factors should not be ignored in the selection of different translation methods. The communication of cultural factors behind language is an important content in the translation of political documents. Translation studies should not only focus on the differences in language but also in culture, and comprehensively explore the interaction among source language, target language, author, translator and reader from the cultural perspective (Bassnett & Lefevere 2001). When it comes to language expressions with distinctive cultural characteristics, “language, culture and translation” should be organically combined in translation, so as to not only convey the information of the source language accurately, but also make the target language readers understand the ideological and cultural connotation of the source language successfully.

The study of the translation work of Xi Jinping’s thought of “People-Centered” provides useful theoretical reference and practical materials for the translation of political

documents, especially for English translation. It will not only help the international community understand the CPC's achievement view of "People-Centered", but also help establish the international democratic image of the Chinese people as master of the country. At the same time, it serves the strategy of "Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture to Go Out" and enhances cultural confidence of our nation. It has strong theoretical and practical significance for target readers to objectively and comprehensively understand the wisdom of governing the country under the new generation of leaders of the Party.

## 5. Conclusion

*Xi Jinping the Governance of China II* is an important official medium for the international community to understand China's domestic and foreign policies. It provides a comprehensive and in-depth interpretation of the major policies and outlines for the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics at the current stage. Through the study of the translation strategies of ancient Chinese poems concentrating on the ideology of "People-Centered" in the English version of *Xi Jinping the Governance of China II*, this paper finds that the translation strategies adopted in the translation are flexible and varied, including literal translation, literal translation plus additive translation and literal translation plus free translation, which not only retain the linguistic expression characteristics and traditional cultural characteristics of the source language but also conform to the reading habits of target readers. It conveys the governance wisdom of the new generation of Chinese leaders, and interprets the service concept of CPC, thus achieving the political purpose of effective publicity. From the perspective of culture, this paper probes into and summarizes the translation strategies of ancient poems in the political documents, so as to realize the perfect combination of classical cultural elements with political thoughts in the new era. Therefore, an effective translation of political literature plays a decisive role in strengthening the mutual understanding between the world and China, and enhancing the recognition of China's development model by the world.

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