RESEARCH ARTICLE

Tapping into the Present Political Translation and Editing in China: Problems and Pathways as Reported by Multi-players

Junchao Wang

Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, China
Email: 201510091@oamail.gdufs.edu.cn
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0004-9010-8572

Abstract:

This study explores the recent history of political translation in China by analyzing the data reported by different players – the translators, foreign (language) experts and editors from China International Publishing Group and Foreign Languages Press – involved in the National Political Discourse Translation projects as represented by the translation and editing of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*. They provide retrospective think-aloud data of the recent (political) translation history. By mining the data quantitatively and qualitatively, we gain access to the translation idea of the players, and it shows that actors of different identities and backgrounds play different roles. These players identify different issues in the translating and editing process and offer their solutions through varied pathways. Specifically, the translator-in-chief oversees the communicative effects of the core political ideas and ideology, and advocates the principle of "Chinese-primary Foreign Expert-secondary Cooperation"; the foreign expert, seeing himself as a guest, deals with the issues of cultural differences and the story-telling of Chinese thoughts, and puts forward the "Double-track Communication" pathway; the editor, positioning herself as the gatekeeper and quality-checker, stresses language accuracy and punctuation formats at a micro level and practices the "Three-editing & Three-proofreading" principle. The findings underline the power imbalance in translaboration that needs to be addressed in political translation projects. This study provides a practice-based perspective for the political translation projects of the day, and it also has implications for recent translation history research.

Keywords: political translation practice, translation and editing, multi-players, retrospective think-aloud, problems and pathways

1. Introduction

Translation history studies (THS) have received significant academic attention in China, with numerous books and articles on literature and science translation practices, particularly during the twentieth century, and the history of Buddhist scripture translation (see Zou, 2017; Xie, 2021; Wang, 2023a). However, translation history, especially the (past and) recent history of political translation of the last two decades, has been less explored, with only a few exceptions (Yang and Zhang, 2019; Long, 2020; Chu, 2020; Wang & Munday, 2020). To address the national call for the "Going Global of Chinese Culture" and the Belt and Road Initiative, the translation of China's political discourse has become a popular topic for both practitioners and academia. This has led to various activities, such as Seminars on International Communication (2009-2021), forums on the Translation of Central

Government Documents Translation and Research (2015-2021), Lectures on Foreign Communication and Translation of Chinese Political Discourse by China Translators Association, journal columns by *Foreign Languages Research*, and *Journal of Tianjin Foreign Studies University* among others, the publication of nearly 1,000 related papers on CNKI (i.e., the largest Chinese digital academic publication database), and the release of *Chinese Political Discourse Translation Work Manual* (2019). Despite the abundance of research on scripture translation and modern literature and/or science translation, there has been a lack of research on China's political translation in the twenty-first century. In fact, a study of China's modern political translation enjoys several advantages, among which the prominent two are the availability of discernible (source and target) texts as materials and the multiple channels of voices of actors/players involved in the political translation activities, boosting the abundance and verification of THS. This study aims to explore the present history of political translation in China by analyzing the data reported by different participants involved in the National Political Discourse Translation projects, represented by the translation (and editing) of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*. The study focuses on the different roles and views of translation on the part of multiple players, including a translator, a foreign (language) expert from China International Publishing Group (CIPG) and Foreign Languages Press, and an editor from *China Daily*. By transcribing and analyzing the data, this research provides retrospective think-aloud data (RTA, Wang and Zeng, 2015; Prokop, Pilař and Tichá, 2020), which presents a significant advantage compared to studies based on dead and scattered materials open to be 'schematized' into history (Croce, 1921:133) and employed to 'restore the role of translators'(Li, 2016). Through quantitatively and qualitatively mining the data, we gain insight into the translation ideas of the players and how players of different identities and backgrounds played different roles in political translation.

2. China's Political Discourse Translation

Political discourse translation (PDT) has gained significant momentum in China, and is receiving increasing attention worldwide. Political discourse refers to 'different instances of communications and discourses that expound a country's foreign policy, governance mechanism and/or political philosophy' in various contexts for a specific political purpose. This includes speeches, interviews, reports, editorials, declarations, slogans conveyed in press conferences of various government agencies, diplomatic documents issued by relevant state agencies, white papers, legal provisions, various treaties, agreements, and communiqués reached in political communications (Chu, 2020:24; Liu and Li, 2022:1). In this section, we will review both the translation practice and research of political discourse mainly in China to provide a practical and theoretical background for the present research.

The history of PDT in China can be traced back approximately a hundred years to the translation of Mao's article in 1927, and can be divided into three periods: the national translation of *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* from 1950 to 1977, the PDT led and organized mainly by the Department of Central Government Document Translation between 1979 and 2004, and the last two decades (2005 to the present). While existing studies tend to take the Eighteenth National People's Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) (2012) as the starting point of the third period of PDT, it actually began much earlier. In 2005, Xi Jinping suggested improving the writing style of political discourse for domestic and international communication, which had a profound impact on the translation of

China's political discourse. This call from the top led to the publicity and translation of the government White Papers, the Seventeenth CPC National Congress documents in 2007, the national government reports, *Xi Jinping's Governance of China*, as well as the translation of government work reports at the municipal and provincial levels. As Xi Jinping stated, 'China is moving faster to build a new dual circulation model with domestic circulation as the mainstay and domestic and international circulation reinforcing each other' (Xi, 2022:144).

Unlike the first two stages, the current stage has captured the attention of both translation practitioners and theorists. From the perspective of translation practices, the present PDT involves individuals and teamwork. Firstly, interpreters play a crucial role as bridges in international communication and high-level dialogues. The interpreting work of key figures such as Sun Ning (the Chief Interpreter of President Xi and Yang Jiechi), Zhang Lu (the Chief Interpreter of ex-President Hu Jintao and ex-Premier Wen Jiabao, and the Government Reports), and Zhang Jing (the interpreter of Sino-U.S. High-Level Strategic Dialogue) was keenly observed by a wide audience, thanks to the development of the internet and technology. For instance, the public can watch the consecutive transmission of the Government Report delivered by Premier Li Keqiang and interpreted by Zhang Lu, and they can also access a sectional video of the Sino-U.S. High-Level Strategic Dialogue where Zhang Jing served as the interpreter in March 2021. Secondly, the translation of political texts tends to be completed in the form of translation projects delivered through teamwork, which is a typical example of what Alexa Alfer called "translaboration" (see Dai, 2021).

Take the translation and editing of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* as an example. The four volumes[1] were compiled by the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council Information Office, with the support of the Research Institute of Party History and Literature of the CPC Central Committee, and CIPG. The volumes are designed to help the national and international communities gain a better understanding of the latest developments in President Xi's thoughts and of the development path that China has chosen (see Xi, 2022: Publisher's Note). Except for the first volume, the others were published in Chinese and English simultaneously. For instance, the second volume was compiled by CIPG, which organized a "translation team of 29 elites" consisting of 19 senior translators, 7 experts for the finalization, one foreigner as the English reviser, and two foreign experts). The last two volumes were compiled, translated, and published in a similar way. Therefore, the translation of this paramount book was successfully done by a team and led to certain working and translating procedures. After the compilation, the senior translators first rendered it in English, and the foreign experts revised the translation before the Chinese experts finalized it, and the team proofread it thrice. Thanks to the development of online lectures and MTI programs in China, the translation processes are discussed more than the compilation work, more than previous PDT activities. The availability of data will be discussed further in section 4.

---

[1]The first volume, consisting of 79 texts spoken or written between Nov. 2012 and June 13, 2014, was first published in Oct. 2014; the second one composed of 109 articles and 29 photos starting from Aug. 8, 2014 to Sept. 29, 2017, was published in Nov. 2017; the third book, containing 92 pieces delivered by President Xi between Oct. 18, 2017, and Jan. 13, 2020, and the fourth one, covering a total of 109 texts from Feb. 3, 2020, to May 10, 2022, were published in both Chinese and English versions in 2020 and 2022, respectively.

Over the last two decades, a plethora of monographs, master's dissertations, doctoral theses, and papers have been produced in relation to PDT. Liu is one of the first scholars to publish a monograph on PDT that adopts an adaptation-selection view (2010). Zhang's *Introduction to Translation in China's Global Communication* (2013) elaborates on the features, principles, and strategies for translating the genre. Lu's book (2016) discusses the topic by relating translating strategies with the construction of the national image. Zhu (2017) explores the politicality in the translation of political discourse and constructs a "Three-point System" framework for the studies of PDT. Deng's (2021) investigation into the translator's subjectivity focuses on the translation of the White Papers of China's Government in the last two decades. These studies reveal a trend from the general to the specifics.

Influenced by the aforementioned monographs and others, many dissertations address the translation of China's political discourse from a variety of perspectives, including the Constructionist View (Hu, 2010), Communication Studies (Yang, 2010), Narrative Stance (Hu, 2014), Reception Theory (Yin, 2019), and Functionalist Approach (Jiang, 2022). Additionally, there is a large body of literature devoted to the third stage of PDT. Based on publications on CNKI from 2000 to 2019, Chu (2020) presents a trend over the last two decades of research of increasing use of keywords such as Xi Jinping (freq. 209), translation strategy (freq. 143), The Governance of China (freq. 106), translation methods (freq. 56), P.R.C. (freq. 49), political discourse translation (freq. 47), and China's international publicity (freq. 45). Liu and Li's (2022) review article presents similar results on the topics chosen but moves one step further to reveal the specifics of PDT, including the principles, strategies, criteria, and styles of PDT (accounting for 39.94%), political terms, neologisms, and culture-loaded words (18.08%), numerals, four-character phrases, quotes, ambiguity, and idioms (8.16%), political metaphors (6.71%), ideology in political discourse (4.66%), the construction of China's international discourse (2.62%), translator's subjectivity (2.04%), PDT and the construction of the national image (1.75%), political publicity (1.17%), and the reception effects of PDT (0.87%). These reviews reveal that present PDT research is largely confined to the qualitative paradigm, as quantitative research takes up only 3.21% of the total and is under-explored in a multidisciplinary approach. These findings point out avenues for further studies, including the present research. Rather than confining to speculative, qualitative investigation of the language/discoursal features, this research attempts to explore the roles of multiple players in the translating processes both qualitatively and quantitatively, shifting the focus from the ontology of PDT to the players involved in the present history of translation activities and shifting the method from speculation to introspection and/or retrospection.

3. TAPs Analysis of Political Discourse Translation

In this section, I introduce an introspective approach to translation process analysis, similar to the Think-aloud Protocols (TAPs) and/or retrospection. It is crucial to recognize that the players involved in the translation of political discourse are not limited to those who perform cross-language and cross-culture translation work but also include those who revise, proofread, and edit the translated works. Therefore, TAPs, which originally referred to 'recording and subsequently analyzing what translators said that they were doing during translating' (Malmkjær, 2020:58), now encompass all players who provide introspective reports on what they were doing during the translation and post-editing process. Similarly, retrospection, which is designed to investigate the translators' recall of their thoughts after

the translation, is also used in this study to explore the interpretation of the political translation on the part of the translator-in-chief, editor, and reviser.

The introspective approach, developed by William Wundt for experimental psychology and later popularized by Ericsson and Simon in 1980, has been the dominant empirical approach for translation process research (TPR) before the introduction of evoked-response potentials (ERPs), functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), key-logging, and eye-tracking (see Malmkjær, 2020; Wang, 2023b). This paradigm provides cognitive translation studies with verbal data from concurrent or retrospective TAPs, interviews, and responses to questionnaires (see Jakobsen, 2017:22). In this study, I adopt a version of TAPs that involves recording and transcribing public talks given by various actors and players of PDT, such as translators, editors, and revisers, about key political discourse translations. Unlike traditional TAPs, this approach focuses on the narrations of the translation process rather than the actual thinking aloud during the translation. The Q&A sessions that follow the interviews can be seen as equivalent to retrospective protocols, as the recalls are driven by responses to the questions asked by the audience and provide information about how the players evaluated their decision-making processes in terms of translation problems and solutions based on various considerations. However, such cued retrospection data account for a small percentage compared with the introspective data in this study.

The introspective approach to translating process research is not a new concept, and it has been applied to the study of translator revision and editing (see Krings, 2001; Shih, 2015). However, it is a relatively new and challenging approach for translation history research and PDT studies. As mentioned earlier, exploring present-day PDT and/or translation history is feasible and convincing now because the translation players are alive, and their verbalization of the translating processes, both publicly and privately, carries more weight and authenticity than speculation based on fragmentary translations or historical documents. This is why Benedetto Croce argues that all history is contemporary history and is constructed from dead and scattered materials that can be "schematized" into narratives (Croce, 1921:133). Therefore, my intention is not to gain a glimpse into the translating process in its strict TAPs definition, but to explore translation processes more broadly, including the players' "thinking aloud" and their essential role in translating and negotiating with other actors about why and how the translation is ultimately completed. I also combine introspection with retrospection, which allows me to access the views and voices of the players across cultures and powers. This approach aligns with the practices in translation history research, which aims to develop a "translation historiography" that 'deals with the understanding of the evolution of the many sorts of translation knowledge and know-how' (Rundle, 2022:17).

Broadly speaking, the advances in translation studies have led to two discernible outcomes. Firstly, the focus of the sociology of translation has shifted toward highlighting the various agents and agencies involved in translation, as evidenced by the works of Wolf and Fukari (2007), Wang (2011), and Wang and Wang (2019). A consensus has emerged in this line of research that views translation as a social practice that is situated within specific social contexts. Sociological explorations of translation have enabled us to recognize translation practitioners and academics as 'a constructing and constructed subject in society' (Wolf, 2007:1). Secondly, there has been a theoretical reflection on the construction of translation knowledge. Translation is now viewed as a social practice that involves the cross-

language and cross-cultural processing, reconstructing, and re-transmitting of knowledge, as argued by Yang (2021) and Rundle (2022). This emphasis on the construction of translation knowledge is particularly relevant today, as translation activities often involve large-scale projects that require the cooperation and coordination of multiple actors and agencies.

A multi-player perspective of PDT can assist translation researchers in identifying the motives and motivations that drive actors' conscious choices in selecting source texts and revising their translations. Although a significant amount of political discourse has been translated and disseminated globally, such as *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* (Vols. I to III), which has been successfully published in 34 languages and distributed in over 170 countries and regions, the invisible actors and their decision-making processes that underlie the completion of these translation projects remain largely unknown. To address this gap, the present study aims to analyze data from talks and interviews given by the players involved in these translation projects. The talks, which are based on the players' political translation processes, provide introspective data that corresponds the translation practice as part of China's international communication. The interviews, along with the following Q&A sessions, offer retrospective data of certain aspects of the translation activities.

To achieve this goal, we will briefly introduce the talks and interviews that will be analyzed in the following section. A total of three talks on PDT were recorded and transcribed. The first talk, entitled "Being One's Own Editor," was delivered by Editor Liu Yi in 2020 and lasted for 1 hour and 8 minutes, resulting in a transcription of 11,114 characters (and words). The second talk, themed "To Understand Better, to Translate Precisely and to Communicate Effectively," was given by Translator-in-chief Huang Youyi in 2022, lasting 1 hour and 43 minutes and resulting in a transcription of 24,173 characters (and words). The third talk was given by David Ferguson and lasted around 1 hour and 57 minutes, resulting in a transcription of 16,978 words. Together, these talks provide a corpus of introspective data. To triangulate this data, we collected and built a corpus of retrospective data consisting of four interviews in their original form of reports, totaling 12,897 characters. By triangulating introspective and retrospective data, the following section will analyze the verbal reporting from three individuals in different roles in PDT, focusing on the problems and pathways that are significant for China's international communication both practically and academically.

4. Problems and Pathways in PDT Reported by Multi-Players

4.1 Direct quotation

The first major player is Huang Youyi, the former Deputy Director General and Editor-in-Chief of China Foreign Language Bureau, CIPG, who served as the translator-in-chief and finalizer in the translation and editing of *Xi Jinping's Governance of China* (vols. I-IV). Through his talks and interviews, the public and academia gained insight into the processes involved in translating and publishing political discourses at the highest levels. According to retrospective data, Huang (2018) conceptualized the translation task as a 'translation and publication project that is of the utmost importance.' He emphasized the need for a specialized editing-translating team comprised of experts in domestic publicity and international communication from the very beginning. Unlike previous

translation teams during the first two stages of translating national leader's discourse from the 1950s to the turn of the 21st century, the present translation team prioritized the target readers of the translated work and their needs. Huang stated, 'Our team took into account from the very start which articles could be compiled and how they could be classified into chapters based on foreign readers' needs' (ibid.). Therefore, from the perspective of the translator-in-chief, translating President Xi's discourses is of paramount importance and is part of China's international publicity, deserving high attention and team efforts. With this understanding, Huang verbalized the entire translation and publication process, focusing on the problems and pathways and dividing them into three sections, as clearly shown in the topic of his speech: the understanding of the source text, the preciseness of the translation, and the effectiveness of the translation abroad. He dedicated 40 minutes, 30 minutes, and 33 minutes to each section, respectively.

In the first section of his talk, Huang focused on the linguistic features of the source political discourse and their challenges for translation. These challenges included political terms, ambiguities, collocations, and section headings (but in the opposite way). Huang proposed several pathways or methods to address these challenges, from conversion, contextualization, looking up definitions, negotiation, foreignization, to diversification. Specifically, he began by discussing the 19 section headings in the translated book (*Xi Jinping's Governance of China,* Vol. III). He explained that the headings were translated into concise phrases for two main reasons: bookbinding and the length of Chinese-to-English conversion. He emphasized that the section headings could not be translated word-for-word because this would make the translated headings too long for typesetting and binding, and English sentences are typically 1.3 times longer than Chinese sentences. Therefore, the section headings were translated based on the main ideas abstracted from the entire section and into (compound) noun phrases to accommodate the reading habit of English readers. For example, the title of the first section (a long verb phrase) was translated as "Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era". Another challenge, according to Huang's verbalization, was the semantic changes of some keywords in different volumes of President Xi's books. As a key player in the translation project, Huang had a dynamic and comprehensive view of all the source texts and target texts, which helped him find various ways of translating the same words and expressions. He provided many examples like "建设" (literally to build, construct, or enhance), "扶贫" (poverty elimination), and "社会" (societal), and offered solutions by placing the changing and challenging words and expressions in the social and cultural context of China where President Xi delivered the speeches. The third difficulty that Huang reported was pointed out by foreign experts: the translations of political terms by the Chinese translators were incomprehensible to the foreign expert(s). To address this problem, Huang explained that they read other materials related to political discourses to find the definitions of the terms and made them comprehensible to foreigners by negotiating with foreign experts. He provided an example of "党的政治建设" (from "to enhance our Party's political building" to "strengthen our Party's political commitment" and finally "to reinforce our Party's political foundations" as the final version). Other types of problems and pathways discussed by Huang are summarized and listed in Table 1.

In the second section, Huang focused on the production of the target text based on a precise understanding of the source text and adaptation to the target culture. He covered various translation

problems, including the tone and flavor of the target text and incomprehensible translations. Huang adopted the corresponding principles, such as faithfulness to the source text and expressiveness in the target text. The first problem Huang discussed in this aspect was the reproduction of repetitive words. Repetitiveness is a feature of Chinese, but these words require differentiated renderings of the connotative meanings. Huang explained that this was solved by fully taking the foreign expert's suggestions to produce a high-standard English version. Another issue discovered by the foreign editor was the associative meaning of certain translations in the target culture, such as "净化政治灵魂", which the English expert revised from "purify our souls" to "keep our souls wholesome". Similarly, the translation of some numerals was incomprehensible as appeared in the first version of the translation. Huang elaborated on this issue with the example "two centenary goals of China", of which each was more than 100 years in fact but was put as such in Chinese. Finally, Huang discussed the approaches to the renderings of old sayings and poetry cited in Xi's speeches. He reported that mainly three approaches were adopted: poetic translating, paraphrasing, and omission.

In the final section, Huang emphasized the communication effects of translation on international readers, their understanding of China, and the image of China, as well as the construction of China's international discourse. He began by discussing the dominance of English ideology in the international discourse system, prevalent since the Cold War era. This system has often portrayed China negatively in the West. To effectively communicate and construct China's international image, Huang's team paid great attention to proper nouns and other words with certain implicature.

Table 1. The Translator-in-Chief's Verbalization of Problems and Pathways

Topics	Problems	Pathways	Motivations
ST Comprehension	Long section headings	Converting V-phrases to concise N-phrases	1) The typesetting & binding; 2) The E-C length & reading habits;
	Semantic change of KW	Putting words in the sociocultural context	1) The fast development of China; 2) The backgrounds of Xi's speeches;
	Political terms	Finding definitions and negotiating	1) The connotation of political terms; 2) A comprehensible rendering;
	Referent ambiguities	Making references to get the specifics	1) The vague expressions in Chinese; 2) The clear logic of English readers;
	Collocations	Render variably based on linguistic contexts	1) Conveying the contextual meaning; 2) The change in political expression;
	Colloquial expressions	Maintaining the style of ST	1) A feature of the original text; 2) The clear logic of English readers;
	Four-character chunks	Conveying the connotative meanings	1) To explain the initiatives clearly; 2) Publicity effect on China's image;
	Repetitive polysemants	Rendering specifically and variously	1) The specific referential meaning; 2) The non-repetitiveness in English;
TT Production	Repeated wording	Differentiating the wording & negotiating	1) The specific connotative meaning; 2) A translation of high standards;
	The tone of TT	Maintaining the original tone & identity	1) The tone of the translation; 2) Construct the author's identity;
	Old sayings and allusions	Transferring the antique & quaint flavor	1) The stylistic features of ST; 2) To maintain the flavor of TT;
	Numerals	Making the translations sensible & precise	1) The logical thinking of TT; 2) To maintain the flavor of TT;
	Pandemic-related words	Avoiding being stigmatization	The discussion of the pandemic earlier in China than in the West;

Revision for Communication Effects	Proper nouns	Avoiding wording of negative implicature	1) The international discourse system; 2) The building of China's discourse;
	Stereotypes in English	Avoiding being stigmatization	1) Negative expressions in English; 2) The effects of publicity on readers;
	Naming of initiatives	Avoiding offending and ambiguities	1) International feedback; 2) Helpful critique & suggestions;
	Rhymed revision	Making the translation rhymed	1) To render precisely and rhymed; 2) A better communication effect;
	Culture-loaded words	Adopting free translation	1) Thinking of and effects on readers; 2) Avoiding communicative ambiguity;
	Chinese "traps"	Avoiding negative associations in English	1) Breaking stereotypes of China; 2) The construction of China's image;

They avoided using ready-made English expressions that carried negative or stereotypical implicature. For example, "中国大陆" was rendered as "mainland of China," "Chinese mainland," or "China's mainland," rather than "mainland China," which is more widely used elsewhere. Another issue Huang discussed was the effective transfer of initiatives taken by President Xi. This type of problems often arises from feedback and critiques by foreign experts. For instance, the "Belt and Road Initiative" and "a global community of shared future" were revised based on feedback and suggestions from foreigners. Huang emphasized that such revisions are necessary in producing high-quality translations.

Based on the introspective data presented and analyzed above, it is evident that Huang, as the translator-in-chief of the project, viewed PDT as a process of translating, revising, and finalizing, with Chinese and foreign actors playing different but cooperative roles. While he attached great importance to the translation-communicative effects by conveying core political ideas and ideology, and constructing China's image and international discourse, Huang was more focused on the linguistic features of the source text, primarily at the wording level (accounting for 89.47%). However, he was less aware of the communicative effects of the translation and its publication, as most of the key problems were identified by foreign experts. Therefore, he emphasized the importance of cooperation between Chinese translators, English editors and foreign experts, advocating a "Chinese-primary foreign expert-secondary" principle for PDT. Furthermore, Huang had a clear vision of the labor divisions involved in the translation process, stating that the participants could be grouped into two categories: a younger group in their thirties responsible for translating the book and an older group of seven or eight people in their fifties to seventies who were responsible for finalizing the translation.

4.2 The view of the foreign expert as editor-cum-reviser

David Ferguson is another key player in the translation and editing of *Xi Jinping's Governance of China* (vols. I-IV). He is a British editor and the recipient of the Chinese Government Friendship Award (2021) and the Chinese Book Special Contribution Award (2021). Ferguson came to China in 2006 and served as the editor-cum-reviser in the translation and editing process. As an English expert, he made significant contribution to the revising process of the translation and was regarded as the authoritative English expert among the translation team and academia. In a recent interview, Ferguson stated that he viewed the translation task as one that 'makes the message accessible to a Western audience' (Ferguson 2022). He was one of the first readers of the translation and was 'right at the sharp edge of that effort and the initiative' (ibid.).

David Ferguson's approach to the translation project differed from that of the Chinese players. He was able to set the translation task in its national and international context, following President Xi's instructions for publicity. He also saw President Xi as a valuable ally in the translation process. According to Ferguson, the translation project was objective-driven rather than task-driven. He explained that an objective-driven person is creative and always questioning, with a broad focus and an extensive vision. In terms of translation and interpreting, he aimed to communicate information effectively by telling stories that respond to or fascinate the target readers and by adding value to the translations. In contrast, a task-driven person tends to be mechanical, with a narrow focus and a limiting vision, translating words from one language to another like a machine. Ferguson's objective-driven approach focused on three areas: language, structures, and cultural differences. He began with the presenting or narrating format issue of China's discourse.

David Ferguson identified the format of China's international discourse in the translation process as a key problem. He noted that similar to China's internal discourse, it did not respond to President Xi's call for a simple and clear writing style or address the stereotypical publicity of China by foreign media or forces. As a result, it lacks human element or communication in China's international discourse. Ferguson emphasized the importance of this issue, given the ongoing "existential battle of ideas" in the world, where powerful and influential forces are opposed to China's national rejuvenation and portray China as a threat. Having lived in China since 2006, Ferguson has witnessed the country's remarkable development and observed how foreign broadcasters have portrayed China. He noted that the pillars of China's soft power, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the South China Sea, poverty alleviation, and environmental protection, are being deliberately undermined. This negative portrayal has stereotyped China as a hostile and negative force. To counter this narrative, Ferguson suggested that China engage with the international audience on a human level through a new generation of communicators who can create a positive message and tell uplifting stories. This approach would enable China to fight against undermining its image and project its soft power on the international stage, strengthening China's political discourse globally.

David Ferguson also addressed language issues at the word and expression levels. He identified a few words that were used unwisely and had negative connotations, resulting in poor communication and devaluing the translation. Some of these words were translated using online dictionaries without considering their impact on the overall message. While these mistakes may seem minor, they

accumulate and can have a significant effect on the quality of translation. Ferguson also discussed structural issues in PDT, such as the excessive use of adverbs, verbs, passive voice, and repetitive lists of to-do items. Consequently, the translated work reads like a machine translation and is not reader friendly. Finally, he highlighted cultural issues that resulted in repetition and verbosity in the translation. Ferguson pointed out that Chinese culture has a tendency to repeat itself, which works well in Chinese thinking but sounds ridiculous to English readers. In addition, the Chinese often use too many words to convey a simple message, which is not following the President Xi's call to "tell China's story".

Upon reflection, some questions were analyzed as retrospective data. When asked about the most problematic issue with the translation, David Ferguson saw culture as the most significant challenge. He explained that cultural differences made the translation difficult to read and that the solution was to involve individuals who understand English/foreign languages and can engage with people at a human level in creating the message for the international audience. This approach would move beyond mere translation and interpretation and create a positive message that resonates with the audience. Another question was how to strike a balance between words with Chinese characteristics and English translation. Ferguson stated that the primary concern for an objective-driven translator is the effective communication to the audience, rather than the (dictionary) meaning of words.

In contrast to his Chinese counterpart, who focused minutely on the translation and editing process and followed task procedures, David Ferguson saw himself as an objective-driven translator and reviser. He identified cultural differences as a significant challenge during the translation and editing process and provided clear suggestions for improvement. Ferguson recommended following President Xi's instructions on publicity and his call to "tell China's story". He emphasized the importance of being aware of cultural issues and involving individuals who understand foreign languages and can engage with people to create a message that resonates with the international audience. Furthermore, he suggested adding value to the translation by eliminating language mistakes. Overall, Ferguson's approach focused on macro-level issues related to China's internal and international discourse, rather than the minutiae of the translation and editing process.

Table 2. The Foreign Expert-Cum-Reviser's Verbalization of Problems and Pathways

Vision	Topics	Problems	Pathways	Motivations
A global vision of China's international discourse to tell China's story	Narrating issues	No human element in China's internal discourse	Following President Xi's instructions	To engage with and win people
		The international discourse follows the same format	Narrating by telling stories	To change China's stereotype
		Unresponsive to the ideological battle of ideas	Retelling the strong pillar of China's PD	To respond to the foreign forces
	Language issues	Wording with wrong connotations	Using China's terms or borrowing	Be simple, clear, catchy and intriguing
		Online dictionaries or CAT-led issues	Thinking more about the impact of words	To avoid negative nuance meanings
		Buzzwords	Revising for adding value to the translation	To enhance the entire effect
	Structural issues	Excessive use of adverbs	Using adverbs sparingly	To make the translation elegant
		Abuses of the passive voice	Using it with a good reason	Don't be a passive translator
		Endless long lists of to-do lists	Omitting the subjects	To make the translation concise
	Cultural issues	Repetition of words, ideas, and large bodies of information	Getting rid of pointless repetition	To make it work well in English
		Verbosity	Deleting the verbose words	To reproduce it simply
		Ponderous rehashes of information rather than a story	Producing a story	To tell the audience China's story

4.3 The editor's view

The final speaker was Liu Yi, a senior editor and translator for *China Daily*. Liu views the editing process in translation as a way to learn from errors and become more conscious of the rules. In her verbal reporting, she covered three key aspects of editing: a consciousness of editing (questioning and revising with good reason), texture (coherence, cohesion, and wholeness), and a consciousness of writing (reader orientation, readability, and point of view). Liu began by discussing the consciousness of editing, highlighting common problems that editors often encounter, such as ambiguity, unfaithfulness, and common mistakes. She emphasized the importance of following editing rules and pointed out common mistakes that translators often overlook, such as the translation of political, religious, and ethnic words and expressions, maps, and geographical names. Moving on to the textual and reader dimensions, Liu discussed illogical and incoherent sentences and paragraphs that lacked focus, which she often encountered during the editing process. She also noted redundancies and misuse of words that could affect the translation and/or the readers. Overall, Liu stressed the importance of being conscious of these aspects of editing in order to produce high-quality translations.

In contrast to the perspectives of the players analyzed previously, the Chinese editor of PDT approached the topic from her unique identity as an editor and translator, drawing on her educational background in editing studies and translation studies. This combined background allowed her to be particularly conscious of editing issues that may be unknown to translators, as well as translation and communication issues that may go unnoticed by editors. As the final gatekeeper or quality-controller, editors are responsible for language and style formats at a micro level. They must identify and eliminate errors and mistakes, often practicing the "Three-editing and Three-proofreading" principle formulated for the media. This emphasis on attention to detail and quality control is a crucial aspect of the editor's role.

Table 3. The Editor's Verbalization of Problems and Pathways

Vision	Topics	Problems	Pathways	Motivations
A mixed vision of editing and translating	Editing-minded	Literal translation or ambiguous referents	Problems-conscious by searching for information	To correct the translation
		Error-prone lists (misspelling, grammar, style inconsistency)	Questioning with a good reason	To master the editing rules
		Unfaithfulness	Revising with a good reason	To be faithful to the ST
	Texture-minded	Illogical sentences	Making it smooth on a textual level	To make the translation logical
		Incoherence	Restructuring the sentences	To make it coherent and clear
		Unfocused paragraph	Producing a topic sentence/condensing	To highlight the topic of the text
	Writing-minded	Reader-consciousness	Being reader-oriented	To avoid misunderstanding
		Semantic redundancy	Making it concise by deleting	To improve the readability of TT
		Taking stances	Taking neutral points of view	To avoid taking positions

The above analysis reveals that the present PDT is a translaboration event that involves multiple players of different identities and roles throughout the translation process. Due to their unique identities and powers, they hold diverse views on translation, identify problems through different channels, and solve them in distinct ways. In general, the (Chinese) editor has the least power among the three types of actors, limiting her efforts to the linguistic or micro level of correcting language errors and style mistakes. The foreign expert, on the other hand, has a global vision of the task but little say over changes and revisions, as some revisions with good intentions were not adopted in the final version of the translated work. The translator-in-chief has the overall responsibility of the translation project and greater power in finalizing the translation, but unfortunately cannot predict the possible reception of the translated work by foreign readers. It is important to note that those with the most power, the creators and compilers of the source materials, are not physically present in the translation and thus are not discussed here. Overall, these findings underscore the 'power imbalance in translaboration' (Dai, 2021) that needs to be addressed and reworked for the benefit of political translation projects and other translaboration projects in the future.

5. Conclusion

PDT is a unique genre that takes place in a complex international political context, embedded in battles of powers and ideologies. Through our analysis of introspective and retrospective data, we have found that today's PDT is different from its precedents in history because the once marginalized and invisible players involved in political translation are now becoming increasingly visible and have the channels to make their views and voices heard, and that players of different backgrounds and identities highlight different problems and pathways in the process. The translator-in-chief emphasizes the translation-communicative effects with core political ideas and ideology in mind, advocating the "Chinese-primary foreign expert-secondary cooperation" principle. The foreign expert, seeing himself as a guest in China, takes issue with translationese and focuses on cultural differences and the narrating format of China's internal and international discourse on a macro-level. He also suggests that those who understand English and can communicate well follow President Xi's instructions on publicity and call to "tell China's story" and participate as earlier as possible in creating the message rather than merely translating or post-editing it. The editor, as the final gatekeeper or quality-checker, stresses language and punctuation on a micro level, practicing the "Three-editing & Three-proofreading" principle.

These findings highlight the power imbalance in translaboration that needs to be addressed and reworked for the benefit of political translation projects in the future and for translation students to learn from. This study provides an in-depth introduction to recent political translation activities and studies in China, followed by the transcription and mining of reporting data from different players involved in the most significant national political translation project in China. Our research offers a practice-based perspective on and triangulated approach to political translation projects and is significant for both present translation history research and a complete history of translation in China. Overall, our analysis sheds light on the complexities of political discourse translation and the importance of addressing power imbalances in translaboration.

References

Chu, X. 20 years of research on the translation of political discourse in China (2000-2019): Based on CNKI database[J] *Journal of Jiaozuo Teachers College*, 2020, 36 (3): 24-27+40.

Croce, B. *Theory & History of Historiography*[M]. Ainslie D (trans.). London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1921.

Dai, Y. F. Power imbalance in translaboration: a perspective from Chinese translation history[J]. *Neohelicon*, 2021,48(2):599-612.

Deng, W. *A study into the categorization of subjectivity-prominent translator competence in translating of overseas-oriented publicity*[M]. Beijing: Intellectual Property Publishing House, 2021.

Ferguson, D. I see the reason why China's system is confident [O/L] 2022-09-27. *Overseas website* http://china.qianlong.com/2022/0927/7662684.shtml

Hu, J. *A Study of Publicity Translation from the Constructivist Perspective* [D]. Shanghai: Shanghai International Studies University, 2010.

Hu, X. *Research on Publicity Translation from the Perspective of Narratology* [D]. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Studies University, 2014.

Huang, Y. The publication of The Governance of China: Introducing the translation team. *Chinanet* [OL] 2018-02-01. http://health.china.com.cn/2018-02/01/content_40212454.htm

Jakobsen, A. L. Translation Process Research [A]. *The Handbook of Translation and Cognition* [C]. Schwieter W. & Ferreira A. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2017, pp.21-49.

Jiang, L. *A functionalist approach to the translation of Chinese-Korean publicity* [D]. Beijing: Beijing Foreign Studies University, 2022.

Li, S. Restoring Bing Xin's position in the history of Chinese translation [J]. *Journal of Oriental Translation,* 2016 (3): 30-34.

Liu, J., Wen J. Politics, policy and power in translation history[J]. *Perspectives*, 2019, 27(1):167-170.

Liu, H., Li, M. A Bibliometric Analysis of China's Political Discourse Translation Studies: Problems, Hotspots and Trends (2000-2021) [J]. *Journal of Foreign Language and Foreign Language Teaching*, 2022 (4): 1-11+65+145. DOI: 10.13,458/j.cnki.flatt.004873

Liu, Y. *On Translators' Adaptation and Selection*[M]. Chengdu: Southwestern University of Finance and Economics Press, 2017.

Long, X. A review of the translation and research of domestic political texts from the end of the Qing dynasty to the present[J]. *Journal of Anhui Electronic Information Vocational and Technical College*, 2020, 19(3): 80-84.

Malmkjær K. *Translation and Creativity* [M]. London/New York: Routledge, 2020.

Prokop, M., Pilař, L., Tichá, I. *Impact of think-aloud on eye-tracking: a comparison of concurrent and retrospective think-aloud for research on decision-making in the game environment*. sensors (Basel). 2020 May 12;20(10):2750. doi: 10.3390/s20102750. PMID: 32408507; PMCID: PMC7294419.

Rundle, C. (ed.). 2022. *The Routledge Handbook of Translation History*[C].New York: Routledge.

Wang, B, Munday J. (eds.). *Advances in Discourse Analysis of Translation and Interpreting: Linking Linguistic Approaches with Socio-cultural Interpretation*[M]. London/New York: Routledge, 2020.

Wang, J. Translation History and Translation Theory History: Concept Distinction and Analysis[J]. *Translation Horizons*, 2023a(1): 90-103.

Wang, J. *Exploring the Translation Processes of Business Metaphors: Triangulated Approaches Adopted* [M]. Montreal: Royal Collins Publishing Group Inc., 2023b.

Wang, J., Zeng, L. Reviewing 50 Years of Research on Western Translation Process: A Multidimensional Analysis Based on Core Documents[J]. *Journal of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies*, 2015, 26 (6): 69-74.

Wang, H. The Name and Nature: Constructing Social Translatology [J]. *Journal of China Translation*, 2011, 32 (1): 14-18+93.

Wang, H, Wang Xi. On the Basis and Development of Translation Sociology: An Interview with Professor Yves Gambier [J]. *Journal of Shanghai Translation*, 2019 (2): 21-26.

Wang, Y. T*he History of Chinese Translation Literature in the Second Half of the 20th Century: 1949-1977*[M]. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2015.

Wei, Z. *On Publicity Translation and the National Image Construction* [M]. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2016.

Wolf, M. Introduction: The emergence of a sociology of translation [A]. *Constructing a Sociology of Translation*[C].Wolf, Michaela & Alexandra, Fukari (eds.). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007, pp.1-36.

Xi, J. *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Vol. IV)*[M]. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2022.

Xie, T. *Rewriting the History of Translation* [M]. Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press, 2021.

Yang, F. Declaration of Transknowletology [J]. *Contemporary Foreign Language Studies*, 2021(5): 2+27.

Yang, M., Zhang, Y. Exploring the dialectical relationship between "political equivalence" and equality of discourse in Sino-Britain diplomatic translation: from Macartney's envoy to China to the joint construction of "Belt and Road" Initiative (1792-2019)[J]. *Journal of Shanghai Translation*, 2020(5): 24-29+94.

Yin, J. Research on Discourse Production, Communication and Reception in the Process of Publicity Translation [D]. Nankai: Tianjin Foreign Studies University, 2019.

Zhang, J. Introduction to Publicity Translation[M].Beijing: National Defense Industry Press, 2013.

Zhu, Y. An Political Analysis of Publicity Translation and Translation Strategies [M]. Suzhou: Suzhou University Press, 2017.

Zou, Z. Studies of the Chinese Translation History in the 20th Century [M]. Shanghai: Zhongxi Book Company, 2017.

About the Author:

Junchao Wang is currently an associate editor of the Journal of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies and a fellow of Institute of Foreign Literature and Culture, with a Ph.D. in Translation Studies. Her research interest lies in translation history, business translation, and metaphor, and she has published over 30 articles on translation studies and foreign language teaching in peer-reviewed journals. Her representative work is *Exploring the Translation Processes of Business Metaphors* (2023).