

# The Study of China's International Publicity Translation from the Perspective of Functionalism: A Case Study of the 2022 Report on the Work of the Government

Jingxuan Yang

Department of English, Hefei University of Technology, Hefei, China

yangjingxuan@mail.hfut.edu.cn

**Abstract.** With the increasing complexity of the international situation, more and more scholars have begun to study political discourses. Leaders of various countries make their speeches to show their positions and convey their ideas for the purpose of influencing the audience. Therefore, a comprehensive and detailed analysis of their reports is particularly important. In the 1970s, Eugene A. Nida put forward the dynamic equivalence, which provided a new theoretical basis for discourse analysis, and the subsequently developed functionalism translation theory also opened up a new way for the analysis of political discourses. Firstly, this thesis selects the report on the work of the government as the authoritative corpus sample, which is attractive and of great research value. Secondly, the thesis analyzes the report on the Work of the Government from the perspective of functionalism translation theory, and explores the language characteristics of the report on the Work of the Government through the study of the fidelity principle, politics principle, culture principle and acceptability principle.

**Keywords:** Functionalism Translation Theory; International Publicity Translation; Report on the Work of the Government.

## 1. Introduction

In the face of profound changes unseen in a century, China's international status and influence are constantly rising. China's ideas have attracted more and more attention, and China's voice has also won wide attention. In order to make the world understand China better and express China's voice more accurately, it is necessary to use appropriate translation as a bridge of communication. As a consequence, international publicity translation plays a crucial role. International publicity translation can not only convey China's ideas, but also build China's image as a great power to construct China's diplomatic discourse system.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Eugene A. Nida proposed the theory of "dynamic equivalence". According to Eugene A. Nida's definition of translation, lexical, semantic, and stylistic equivalence are all included. Both surface-level lexical information and in-depth cultural knowledge are provided through translation. Lexical equivalence, syntactic equivalence, text equivalence, and literary equivalence are the four components of dynamic equivalence. Its key idea is "functional equivalence", which means that translation accomplishes functional equivalence between two types of languages rather than rigid correspondence on the surface of words.

The German functionalism translation theory was put forward by Hans Vermeer and then inherited and systemized by Manttari and Nord. That is to say, Skopos theory of translation initiated by Vermeer, translation behavior theory proposed by Manttari, and finally, function plus loyalty theory proposed by Nord. This theory emphasizes the translation purpose and function of translation behavior itself.

It was Professor Zhang Jian [1] from Shanghai International Studies University who first sorted out the theoretical framework of international publicity translation. He studied the main characteristics, existing problems and causes of international publicity translation in his *Introduction to International Publicity Translation*. The thesis *A Philosophical Reflection on the Development of Studies on Translation for China's International Communication* [2] written by his student Zhu Yihua construct explore translation study, based on the philosophy view of reflection, choose from the angle

of philosophy, integration of predecessors' research, shape a sound framework of STICC with ontological, epistemological, teleological, methodological, axiological and critical concerns, which takes into account the seven ingredients of information communication, namely, the communicator, purpose, content, channel, audience, occasion and effect of communication on the CIC principle of "Three Closes". Later, Jiang Lin [3] summarized the translation principles of Chinese and Korean international publicity translation on the basis of functionalism translation theory and put forward corresponding translation strategies and methods from three perspectives: political, cultural and rhetorical.

Finally, the research is designed to conduct the analysis on reports on the work of the government. At present, many scholars apply the functionalism translation theory to studying the literature texts, but there is little research on corpus mentioned above. The study is conducive to a deeper understanding of the language features of reports on the work of the government, as well as to give suggestions on China's international publicity translation.

## **2. The Introduction of Functionalism Translation Theory and International Publicity Translation**

### **2.1 The Introduction of Functionalism Translation Theory**

Reiss's text type theory divides text into informative text, expressive text and operational text. In addition, Reiss further pointed out the fourth type of text, that is, audio-visual text. This type of text not only has the function of reading, but also can express content through sound and portrait [4]. Later, from Vermeer's Skopos theory, we can see that the purpose of translation is the core element of translation. Manttari's theory of translation behavior regards the original text as a tool that serves the ultimate goal. Finally, Nord added "loyalty" element to functionalism [3].

### **2.2 The Introduction of International Publicity Translation**

International publicity translation is a kind of information sharing, ideological exchange, mind interchange and historical and cultural communication to publicize Chinese stories in foreign languages. It has the general characteristics of translation, namely, in the form of a language transformation and a method of passing thoughts. At the same time, because it pays more attention to actual effects and the audience feedback, pay attention to the two-way flow of information and the construction of national image, it is not completely equal to the general sense of translation, it is a kind of cross-cultural communication activity of "re-creation" in foreign languages [3].

The main purpose of international publicity translation is to make the translation understood by the audience, convey the main idea accurately, introduce China to the world, make the world know about China, improve the culture soft power, build the image of a great power, and form a good international public opinions. We will bring China to the world and bring the world to China. Zhang Kun believes that this is the so-called "know first" principle. Making the world know about China is the most important duty of China's international publicity and communication media. Only by making the public of other countries understand China can China be accepted and finally identified by them. Only with the recognition of the international community can China smoothly integrate into the global system and make use of the peaceful international environment to fully develop and strengthen itself, so as to achieve the strategic goal of China's take-off [5].

## **3. The Principles of Translation in Reports on the Work of the Government from the Perspective of Functionalism Translation Theory**

### **3.1 Fidelity Principle**

- a. 区域发展战略有效实施, 新型城镇化扎实推进.

Regional development strategies were well implemented, and new urbanization was steadily advanced. (Reports on the Work of the Government)

It expresses the current state of economic development, presenting China's image as a great power. The form presented in the text belongs to the juxtaposition structure, which is retained by the translator in the process of translation, and the meaning of the text is accurately expressed while the form is the same. Besides, the translation of such political text must be faithful to the original information and the number expressed must be accurate. Only in this way can we ensure that the content will not be changed when it is transmitted to the international community.

Translators should make every effort to translate worldwide public with a positive outlook, formal language and actions, precise grammar, and reasonable expression. Additionally, the official tone and seamless translation of the content meet the needs of the foreign language audience, creating a favorable impression on them for international publicity. Furthermore, it offers a useful avenue for our nation to create a favorable international reputation and win the support of other nations [3].

### 3.2 Politics Principle

a. 向香港特别行政区同胞, 澳门特别行政区同胞, 台湾同胞和海外侨胞, 表示诚挚感谢!

I express heartfelt appreciation to our fellow countrymen and women in the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions, in Taiwan, and overseas. (Reports on the Work of the Government)

China has always adhered to the concept of peaceful development and made common progress with other countries. The issue of Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan belongs to China's internal affairs and should be accorded adequate respect by the international community. The translator should grasp the political meaning and political discretion of words. The choice of words not only reflects the value judgment but also reflects the political stance. "Compatriots" are translated as "our fellow countrymen and women", embodying its fellow political meaning of the Chinese people. Through the form of translation, the translator points out China's position, illustrates Chinese determinations and hopes that people around the world respect China's sovereignty and will join in the creation of a more harmonious society.

### 3.3 Culture Principle

a. 以习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想为指导, ....., 弘扬伟大建党精神.....

...follow the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era; ...; carry forward the great founding spirit of the Party... (Reports on the Work of the Government)

International publicity translation is a kind of cross-cultural communication activity, which can learn all the civilization achievements and improve oneself. International publicity translation has always played an significant role in China. It is an important way to spread Chinese culture and build international image and express China's voice. Chinese traditional culture emphasizes collectivism. And Chinese people generally have a strong sense of collective belonging and pay more attention to social value orientation [3]. The thoughts and spirits mentioned in example a are consistent with China's conditions, can be implemented into all aspects of social life and are unique cultural elements of China. The culture principle has the important strategic significance in strengthening our country's cultural influence. At the same time, it is also helpful to realize the cultural consciousness and cultural self-confidence mentioned by Fei Xiaotong [6, 7].

### 3.4 Acceptability Principle

a. “放管服” 改革取得新进展.

New gains were made in the reform to streamline administration and delegate power, improve regulation, and upgrade services. (Reports on the Work of the Government)

The proper noun is explained and translated in detail, which not only disseminated China's governance measures, but also made it more clear to the international community what it actually means. This kind of translation is very necessary in international publicity translation. Foreign

audiences are not very familiar with words with Chinese characteristics. When they encounter expressions that do not conform to their habits, translators will make necessary explanations for them, which is conducive to spreading the Chinese ideas.

b. 完成今年发展目标任务, 宏观政策要稳健有效, ....., 科技政策要扎实落地, ....., 社会政策要兜住兜牢民生底线.

To fulfill the development goals and tasks for the year, we should pursue prudent and effective macro policies, .... Science and technology policies should be fully implemented, ..., and social policies should meet basic living needs. (Reports on the Work of the Government)

This stresses Chinese viewpoints, giving the audience a kind of feeling that China has actively fulfilled obligations and assumed responsibilities as the largest developing country. From the perspective of translation, the Chinese text is long. On the basis of conforming to the logic of the text, the long sentence is shortened by the method of divided translation. In the process of translation, we should keep the semantic integrity and logic coherence of the separated parts. Without divided translation, the sentence will be too long, which will increase the difficulty for the audience to understand. Besides, in international publicity translation, it is necessary to establish a sense of identity and understand the language mode of the audience [8]. If a direct translation is carried out according to the language habits of Chinese, it will lack the subject and cause confusion. The translator completes the missing subject, so that the audience can understand the people of strengthening the construction and promoting the reform, without ambiguity, and also in line with the language habits of the audience.

#### 4. Conclusion and Future Work

International publicity translation is a form of translation and should follow the general principles of translation. However, since international publicity translation is a translation form involving timeliness, it should also follow special principles. From the perspective of functionalism, this thesis analyzes the language characteristics of the translated version of the 2022 report on the work of the government from four perspectives: fidelity principle, politics principle, culture principle and acceptability principle. It is found that in the report on the Work of the Government, the fidelity principle is dominant, and most translations are faithful to original information and original manner. From the perspective of politics principle, translations should maintain politics sensitivity and politics seriousness. From the perspective of culture principle, promoting Chinese culture is a must. From the perspective of acceptability principle, attention should be paid to the feelings of the audience and translate according to the language habits and expressions used by the audience.

The so-called “fidelity”, the translation of reports on the work of the government mainly follows the fidelity principle, and the accurate expression of information is the most basic and important part. Faithful to the original information and style, to achieve form and function equivalence. The so-called “politics”, reports on the work of the government is an authoritative political text in China, which carries a large amount of political information, so it requires high political sensitivity and seriousness. We should take a firm political stance, grasp the political implications and avoid any political mistakes [9]. The so-called “culture” emphasizes the interpretation of culture-loaded words appearing in the context of China’s political, economic and cultural progress. They show good national and times characteristics, and the profound influence of Chinese culture is collected among the political words with Chinese characteristics. The precise translation of cultural load words and Chinese characteristic political vocabulary will help the audience to understand the historical process and cultural current situation in a more three-dimensional way and establish a clearer understanding. Translation is not just the straightforward change of the symbols between two languages; it also involves the collision and interaction of several cultural traditions. The so-called “acceptability” aims to pay attention to the audience’s feelings in addition to the text itself. Only by improving the acceptability, our time-honored traditional culture to the outside world, and showing the present

situation of our social development to foreign audiences can we improve the national confidence and cultural confidence of the China.

Through the analysis, we have a deep understanding of the language features reflected at the corpus as well as Chinese publicity corpus.

International publicity translation has its own special rules, and it has higher requirements for translators. However, the translator should be for the purpose of communication, and he or she needs to have a solid background of Chinese and foreign political, economic and cultural knowledge, rather than translating just for the sake of translation [10].

Through the analysis of the language of the corpus, it can be seen that its language form is uniform, regular, and mostly is literal translation, in line with the characteristics of political texts. But this also make the language form of the thesis slightly monotonous. As a consequence, we can adopt a variety of translation methods when translation is loyal to the original information. In this way, the translation methods can be varied while maintaining politics seriousness.

The study of international publicity translation conforms to the requirements of the times and is conducive to the spread of Chinese ideas. This thesis analyzes the language characteristics of the reports on the work of the government, but due to the limitation of the thesis length, a large amount of examples are not used. In future research, more corpus can be selected for detailed and in-depth analysis, so as to make the conclusions more accurate and richer. Secondly, the thesis mainly studies the language characteristics of the reports on the work of the government. Therefore, for further research, it can be better to study other publicity corpus. In this way, we can have a more comprehensive and systematic understanding of Chinese publicity language characteristics. Meanwhile, we will have a deeper understanding on Chinese publicity corpus.

## References

- [1] Zhang Jian. Introduction to International Publicity Translation [M]. Beijing: National Defense Industry Press, 2013.
- [2] Zhu Yihua. A Philosophical Reflection on the Development of Studies on Translation for China's International Communication [D]. Shanghai: Shanghai International Studies University, 2013.
- [3] JiangLin. A Study of Chinese and Korean Foreign Translation from a Functionalist Perspective [D]. Beijing: Beijing Foreign Studies University, 2022.
- [4] Bian Jianhua. Inheritance and transcendence: A study of functionalist translation Skopos theory [M]. Beijing: China Social Science Press, 2008.
- [5] Lu Xiaojun. National Image and Chinese-English Translation Strategies for China's Global Communication [D]. Shanghai: Shanghai International Studies University, 2013.
- [6] Fei Xiaotong. Fei Xiaotong on culture and cultural consciousness [C]. Beijing: Qunyan Press, 2005.
- [7] Chen Xiaowei. Cultural consciousness and audience consciousness in international publicity translation [J]. Chinese Translators Journal, 2013.
- [8] Chen Xiaowei. The Establishment of "identity" in international translation [J]. Chinese Translators Journal, 2007.
- [9] Guo Jiading. Pay attention to the political meaning of diplomatic words [J]. Chinese Translators Journal, 2002.
- [10] Huang Youyi. Adhere to the principle of "Three Closes" in international publicity and deal with the difficulties in international publicity translation [J]. Chinese Translators Journal, 2004.