

Translating *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* (Vol. III): A Socio-semiotic Approach

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Abstract

Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Vol. III), and its English translation, are successful examples of China's active political publicity, which is of great importance in constructing an external discourse system with Chinese characteristics. Taking a Socio-semiotic perspective, in the light of Morris's designative, linguistic, and pragmatic theories concerning methods of qualitative research, this paper analyzes the equivalence between the original text and its English translation, in terms of their contents, linguistic features, and expressive effect. It was found that the translators use a combination of domestication and foreignization strategies, such as free translation, literal translation, literal translation of explication, omission, adaptation, and adding annotation, to achieve, as far as possible, a translation standard of "correspondence in meaning and similarity in function" between the Chinese and the English. By exploring the English translation to help improve the quality of translation of political literature, it is hoped that this study will bring Chinese discourses to the attention of foreign audiences, and promote their understanding.

Keywords

Socio-semiotic Approach; Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Vol. III); Meaning of Signs; Translation Techniques.

1. Introduction

Amid the current trend of political multi-polarization, China's path and development as a power that cannot be ignored are drawing increasing attention around the world. National leaders, notably Xi Jinping himself, have actively shared China's experiences and wisdom of governance with the international community. Yet the influence of China's ideas on global governance does not correspond to its position as a leading world power. International opinion is dominated by the West, while China's influence in this field is rather passive and marginal. Also, China's political ideas and intentions are misinterpreted and twisted from time to time, and there are still quite a few stereotypes and prejudices about China's national image, which are not conducive to the dissemination of true stories about China, and the promotion of its real international status. This is mainly because foreign commentators do not properly understand China's social and historical context, or the cultural ideas contained in its political discourse, which are the important ways for China to convey its principles and concepts of governance. By translating these works into other languages, China offers a window for the world to comprehend its national situation more fully, as well as its domestic and foreign policies, allowing China to construct its external discourse system and to project its soft power. It is therefore crucial to translate these Chinese political texts effectively.

Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Vol. III) includes 92 addresses, reports, speeches, instructions, and directives of General Secretary Xi Jinping, from the 19th CPC National Congress until January 13, 2020. These works systematically reflect the main points of Xi's thoughts on socialism with Chinese characteristics for the new era, significant measures to cope

with changes not before seen in a century of world history, and the new vision and strategies for China's future development, which is the model of Chinese political discourse, and a direct source for presenting to the world Xi's ideas on governance. The English translation was jointly edited by the Office for CPC Literature Translation Studies, as well as by both Chinese and foreign experts from the China International Publishing Group. The excellent quality of the translation makes it is a fine model for research into the translation of published political texts.

In recent years, foreign commentators have made many observations on the English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, but no detailed and systematic academic treatise has been published. Chinese scholars have used two approaches to discuss the English translation. The first is approach to analyze the translation strategy macroscopically. Huang Youyi (2018) points out that the quality of the translation affects its reception by readers, and that this in turn affects the building of a Chinese discourse system. Huang suggests four effective measures to ensure a high quality of translation: grasping the meaning of the original Chinese; adding or deleting certain Chinese historical and cultural contents, depending on the specific situation; adopting internationally accepted expressions; and flexibly translating allusions, based on the context. Zhao Xiangyun (2017) uses specific examples to show that a strategy of combining foreignization and domestication is used for the English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, and that this has achieved a good balance between fidelity and readability. More generally, Zhao also discusses the influence of translation purpose, text type, and cultural consciousness on the formulation of translation strategies. He concludes that a translation should be both faithful and flexible, and he clarifies the referential value of this Chinese-to-English translation to the foreign translation of political literature and its role in the dissemination of political propaganda. Liu Kuijuan (2021) comprehensively explores the English translations of the first three volumes of Xi's work, making a more detailed analysis of the basic considerations and translation principles according to eight aspects, which include treading a fine line with words, paying attention to the logic of the English, and distinguishing the usage of English synonyms, so as to give guidance for foreign translators in China.

Other scholars have published interpretations of the English version of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* from a series of theoretical perspectives, such as Hans Vermeer's skopos theory, functionalist translation theory, conceptual metaphor, and cultural views on translation. Fang Hui (2019), for example, focuses on four kinds of Chinese characteristics in Volume II, and evaluates the strategies and effects of English translation within the framework of skopos theory, showing how skopos can guide the translation of political literature. Lin Rong and Lin Dajin (2016) emphasize a cultural view of translation upon the characteristics of political literature. Taking the English version of *The Governance of China* as an example, they investigate the principles and general trends within the translation of political literature, and emphasize the need to promote the communication of China's culture in its external publicity. Li Yonghong (2018) explores the translation strategies of *The Governance of China* at the textual, lexical, and rhetorical levels, from the perspective of functionalist translation theory. He concludes that the English version basically follows skopos theory, Katharina Reiss's text type theory, and Christine Nord's "function + loyalty" and text analysis, which is a model for political literature translation.

However, when focusing on the process of translating political publicity, previous studies have not devoted much attention to the role of socio-cultural factors in the meaning of language, and have not elucidated any correlation among the translation subjects. This paper will therefore attempt to advance the study of translation of political literature by interpreting the English version of *The Governance of China* III from a Socio-semiotic perspective.

Translation is a social semiotic activity, as it involves the communication needs of human beings. According to the Socio-semiotic theory, language is the most complex sign system, and translation is a social activity, which involves transforming meaning between two linguistic

sign systems (Zhang, 2001). The purpose of studying translation from the view of Socio-semiotics is to examine the linguistic sign system in a socio-cultural context, and to analyze the way in which the meanings of signs in a specific context change dynamically through the static language systems, so as to reveal the precise meaning of the linguistic signs. Translation is a complex process. It involves several factors, such as the original text, the translation, and the audience, as well as the different social and cultural contexts in which the original text and the translation are situated. Socio-semiotics, which impinges upon the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, semiotics, and linguistics, can take account of meaningful linguistic signs, linguistic subjects, and the external world, and can further interpret messages and meanings. *The Governance of China* embodies standpoints, views, and attitudes about China under the leadership of Xi Jinping. Xi's pronouncements represent very particular, unique aspects of Chinese culture, so it is the translators' task to ensure that the signs represented in Chinese correspond to similar signs in the English-speaking world, so that the connotations of the source language are accurately conveyed. If this is not done properly, target language audiences may misread the author's meaning. In more general terms, the basic principles of Socio-semiotics, as they are used to understand and guide the translation of *The Governance of China*, can provide useful linguistic, semiotic, and sociological directions for future research into the translation of political literature.

This paper will begin by giving an overview of the field of Socio-semiotics and how it can be applied to the practice of translation. Focusing on the translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China III*, the translation strategies chosen by the translators will then be analyzed. Attention will be drawn to a series of cases in which the Chinese and English signs do not match, in their designative, linguistic, and pragmatic meanings, with a view to improving the quality of translation of political texts, and to encourage the acceptance of the Chinese discourse throughout the world.

2. Theoretical Framework: The Socio-semiotic Approach

2.1. An introduction to Socio-semiotics

Socio-semiotics, which is based on semiotics, explores the social and pragmatic functions of signs, and the relationships between the semiotic system and human society. Saussure was the first to integrate signs within society. He (2011) declared that "semiotics is a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life", and clarified that linguistics is part of semiotics.

The term "Socio-semiotics" was coined by Halliday. In his *Language as Social Semiotic* (1978), Halliday pointed out that "language and society is a unified concept and need to be investigated as a whole". Language is a sign system with some social functions, which stresses that, as a tool of interaction, its meaning must be considered in a social context. Halliday also emphasized that the "linguistic environment is itself part of the culture, which shapes our behavior patterns". Language is interdependent with culture. Therefore, language should be interpreted and understood in the specific sociocultural context.

Hodge and Kress (1988) developed Halliday's theory. They proposed that the social symbolic nature of language suggests that language should be analyzed not only in terms of the structure of text and language, but also from the viewpoint of social structure, social process, information, and meaning. These constitute the basic idea of the Socio-semiotic approach to language analysis.

2.2. The Socio-semiotic Approach to Translation

Socio-semiotic translation theory is based on Charles Morris's ideas on semiotics and Halliday's concept of Socio-semiotics.

In the 1980s, Eugene Nida introduced Socio-semiotics into the field of translation studies. In his masterpiece *From One Language to Another*, Nida argued that Western translation theories are divided into four different and valid orientations, namely the philological, linguistic, communicative, and Socio-semiotic approaches. Among these, the Socio-semiotic model is the best and the most versatile, for “it deals with all types of signs and codes, especially with language as the most comprehensive and complex of all systems of signs employed by humans. No holistic approach to translating can exclude semiotics as a fundamental discipline in encoding and decoding signs” (Nida, 1986).

The core of the Socio-semiotic approach is semiotic meaning, that is, it focuses on the function, and thus on the meaning of language. The “meaning” here is exactly three aspects of the meanings of language signs proposed by the American behavioral semanticist Charles William Morris. Morris (1971)’s theory of semiotics proposed that any system is an entity consisting of a sign vehicle, a representamen, and an interpretant. The three-dimensional relationship between these three parts forms the meaning of semiotics, which are formal, existential, and practical meaning. Morris then applied the semiotic meaning to the study of language, namely, designative, linguistic, and pragmatic meanings respectively, which almost contains all significant meanings that the translators need to transfer. Designative meaning refers to the relationship between the sign and its object it signifies. Linguistic meaning indicates the relationships between signs themselves, reflected on the phonetic, lexical, syntactic, and discourse levels. Pragmatic meaning is the relationship between the sign and the sign user or interpreter, and it is to a great extent subject to the sociocultural environment of language. Morris’s research helps translators to understand all the meanings of the original text, and thus effectively guides the trans-linguistic and cross-cultural conversion of language signs.

According to Nida (1986), “Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning, and secondly in terms of style”. This summarized the essence of translation, that the source language and the translated language can just achieve relative correspondence under the influence of socio-cultural factors, so that the encoding of language signs in the source language must be taken into consideration in the inter-symbolic conversion. Translators first decode their source texts in the light of the context of the source language, excavate the designative meaning, linguistic meaning, and pragmatic meaning of the source text, then adopt and discard the meaning on the basis of the context of the target language, and finally encode them into the target texts and complete the function of language.

In China, the representative scholar who advocates the sociosemiotic approach is Chen Hongwei in 1996. As language in different sign systems is subject to the specific cultural context in which they are embedded, it is difficult to achieve complete equivalence of signs that are not shared by both the source language and the target language. In view of this limitation, Chen (1998) came up with a translation standard of “correspondence in meaning and similarity in function”. Here, ‘function’ refers to Peter Newmark (2001)’s distinction of language functions, namely the informative, aesthetic, expressive, vocative, phatic, and metalingual functions. In the *Essential Translation from Chinese into English*, Chen held that meaning and function are the intrinsic properties of language as a sign system, and the immanent features of any text. They should be taken as two indispensable factors which cannot be separated from one another in the assessment of translation. Translators should make a trade-off to the three semiotic meanings of the original text, so as to convey correctly the most significant ideas and achieve the proximity of function. Li Ming (1997) expounded the translation principles of Socio-semiotics in a more systematic way. Li established a preliminary framework of Socio-semiotics translation, and put forward two innovative views on translation principles. One is that different people interpret symbols in different ways, so translators will produce various versions. The other is that social symbols change in different historical periods, and

retranslation is therefore essential. Wang Zhijiang (2007) proposed the intersemiotic interaction model of translation, including author and translator, target text and source text, target text and target language culture, source text and target language culture. He also considered the relations between signs as the basic units of translation, which contain linguistic, designative, and pragmatic relations. Translation consists of translating the relations between signs, so as to achieve a Socio-semiotic equivalence between the source text and the target text. The establishment of the Socio-semiotic equivalence is deemed the standard of the Socio-semiotic approach to translation. Tong Ying (2010) elaborated and constructed the theoretical framework of Socio-semiotics, and analyzed the basic issues of translation, corresponding to the six main concepts of Socio-semiotics: social structure and translation motives; discourse and units of translation; social structure and the role of the translator; code or register and translation process; the semantic system and translation equivalence; and register and translation standards. Through these concepts, the theoretical model of Socio-semiotics approach to translation can be formed, effectively guiding translation practice.

3. Analysis of the English Version of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China III*, based on Three Meanings of Language Signs

In accordance with the Socio-semiotic approach, the Chinese-English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* (Vol.III) is to translate Xi's discourse meaning in the context of both Chinese and English societies and cultures. This section will expound the translation techniques adopted by translators, from the perspective of differences in designative, linguistic, and pragmatic meanings between Chinese and English, to accomplish the conversion of the language signs.

3.1. The Conversion of Designative Meaning

Within the framework of the Socio-semiotic approach, designative meaning demonstrates the relationship between language signs and the things, phenomena, nature, or behaviors that it describes in the external world. As Chinese and English belong to different linguistic systems, there are of course many non-equivalent words. There are also many unique concepts in both Western and Chinese cultures. When translating, the task is to figure out the cultural connotations of the words in the original text, with the help of the context, relate the meaningful linguistic signs to their actual referents, then find the equivalent that expresses the same meaning in English.

3.1.1. The Multiple Designative Meanings of Chinese Words and Phrases

In Chinese and Western cultures, the status and role of context are different. China is the high-context culture. The meaning of words is closely related to their context, and repetition tends to be used in political expressions to enhance momentum, whereas most English-speaking countries maintain low-context cultures. English is flexible and straightforward, and like to avoid repetition, so a specific meaning is presented directly and candidly. In the process of translation, context needs to be considered, to show the real meaning contained in the discourse.

(1) 在新时代的征程上，全党同志一定要适应新时代中国特色社会主义的发展要求，提高战略思维、创新思维、辩证思维、法治思维、底线思维能力，增强工作的原则性、系统性、预见性和创造性。(p. 61)

On this new journey, all our Party members must keep abreast with the new requirements of the new era, improve our capacity for strategic, innovative and dialectical thinking, bear in mind the rule of law and our principles, take a holistic, forward-looking and innovative approach to work. (p. 83)

In some cases, the actual connotation of one word is different in specific usages and contexts. Considering the differences in the designative meaning of the five 思维 (sī wéi, the process of thinking about sth.), the translators examine them in their specific context. 思维 in the strategic, innovative and dialectical levels is developed by brain activities that can be cultivated, such as learning, analyzing, generalizing, and summarizing, which is a progressive process. In the Collins Dictionary, “thinking” is defined as “the activity of using your brain by considering a problem or possibility or creating an idea”, which corresponds to the meaning of the first three instances of 思维 in this text. However, in the scope of law and the bottom-line, 思维 refers to a natural consciousness. The phrase 提高能力 implies that Xi urges all Party members to be adept in using legal means and to always stick to our Party’s principles. For this, the translators use the phrase “bear in mind”, which improved the accuracy and readability of the English version.

(2) 这也标志着人民政协制度 正式成立。(p. 292)

This marked the *formal* establishment of the CPPCC system. (p. 341)

(3) 现在，首届中国国际进口博览会 正式开幕了。(p. 199)

The first CIIE is *officially* opened. (p. 235)

The expression 正式 is frequently used in Chinese political texts. Its specific meaning has become generalized on different occasions, but in Chinese-English translation it is usually given as “formal”, “official”, or “full”. The first two are embodied in *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China III*. Depending on the object of speech, translators should not be constrained by the framework of the source language, and should be flexible in their choice of appropriate equivalents. In the Oxford English Dictionary, one of the meanings of “formal” refers to “following an agreed or official way of doing things”. In the present text, “formal” is contrasted with “temporary”, indicating that the CPPCC system is unanimously approved and continuously implemented after many tests. It was established following a solemn and earnest process, and “formal” can capture this connotation. As for the second meaning, “official” in the Oxford English Dictionary means “formal and attended by people in authority”. The China International Import Expo is a state-level exhibition with imports as its theme. It was planned and instituted by Xi Jinping, prepared by a preparatory committee and an executive committee, and attended by leaders of several countries. The CIIE is government-related and authoritative, so “official” is the most appropriate English word here. The deep meaning of the Chinese expression 正式 is different in certain contexts, so translators need to have a keen insight and understanding, so that they choose the most suitable English equivalent words, which will increase the readability of the text.

In short, a Chinese expression does not necessarily always convey the same meaning, so to avoid redundancy, or seek more accurate equivalents, translators must ponder over the connotations of each expression, and then choose an English word which carries these connotations.

3.1.2. Special Political Discourses

Xi’s speech contains some political discourses with Chinese characteristics that are probably not familiar to most foreigners. One is to materialize and visualize complex political concepts, so that they can be understood by ordinary people. In the light of the context, the translators need to comprehend the true meaning that the content refers to, and transfer it into expressions that are acceptable to the target audience. The other is abbreviations that contain numbers. For these, translators usually append an annotation as para-text, to interpret the specific meaning.

(4) “老虎”露头就要打，“苍蝇”乱飞就要拍。正风反腐，涓流莫轻。不管是“老虎”还是“苍蝇”，无论是大腐败还是“微腐败”，都在坚决纠治之列。(p. 510)

We must take out “*tigers*” whenever we see them and swat the “*flies*” that buzz around. We should combat corruption in whatever form and address even the slightest signs. “*Tigers*” and “*flies*” - major and minor corruption cases - are both to be brought under investigation. (p. 591)

In Chinese political discourse, “tigers” and “flies” are the proper terms for combating corruption. The tigers refer to corruption of high-ranking cadres, who can use their power to damage the stability of the country. The flies mean some petty venal officials and their corrupt behavior. Xi aims to stress the task of combating corruption as a vital part of China’s governance. In western culture, the tiger also symbolizes strength and ferocity, and the fly is a tiny bad thing, which is similar to the symbolic meaning in Chinese culture. In this case, therefore, the translators first chose a literal rendering, in order to retain the vividness of the source language, and then added the real significance by including the symbolic meaning between two dashes, so that foreign readers can clearly understand the symbolism, and the levels of the officials represented by these tigers and flies in the Chinese political context.

(5) 两不愁三保障 (p. 155)

The Two Assurances and Three Guarantees (p. 183)

(6) 八大行动 (pp. 204, 451)

The Eight Major Initiatives (pp. 241, 523)

The expression 两不愁三保障 denotes the basic requirements and the core indicator of poverty alleviation in rural areas of China. If it is translated directly into English as “the Two Assurances and Three Guarantees”, foreign readers may well be puzzled. Therefore, the translator uses annotations at the end of the text, to explain that this phrase refers to government assurances of adequate food and clothing, and guarantees of access to compulsory education, basic medical services, and safe housing for impoverished rural residents.

“The Eight Major Initiatives” is a blueprint for China-Africa cooperation, which was announced at the 2018 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. Its goal is to assist in Africa’s development, according to China’s international responsibilities as a major country, and to help to raise the China-Africa cooperative partnership to a new height. Specifically, these initiatives include an industrial promotion initiative, infrastructure connectivity, a trade facilitation initiative, a green development initiative, a capacity building initiative, a health care initiative, a people-to-people exchange initiative, and a peace and security initiative. The translators supply an endnote to “the Eight Major Initiatives” that reappeared in the speech at the opening ceremony of the First China International Import Expo, to make it easier for foreign readers to understand its connotations.

3.1.3. Absence of Culturally Equivalent Terms

Due to various cultural differences between the East and the West, in many cases the referent objects in the Chinese culture are different, or even do not exist in English-speaking cultures. It can therefore be difficult for the translators to find appropriate corresponding words for the English translation.

(7) 深入开展调查研究，解剖麻雀，发现典型，真正把群众面临的问题发现出来。(p. 520)

We should conduct in-depth research to identify prominent problems and difficulties faced by people. (p. 603)

(8) 要完善水沙调控机制，解决九龙治水、分头管理问题。(p. 378)

We need to improve sediment monitoring and resolve the problem whereby *too many government departments* are involved in water management. (p. 439)

In Chinese, the phrases 麻雀 and 龙 have particular meanings. The expression 麻雀 is found in the idiom 麻雀虽小，五脏俱全 from *Fortress Besieged* by Qian Zhongshu, which means “A sparrow may be small but it has all the vital organs.” The sparrow is used to describe something which is small but has momentous importance. However, it is difficult to find an equivalent expression in English. If the translators render the phrase literally as “dissect a sparrow”, even if they further explain that “a sparrow is a small animal but the biggest problem”, the concise and powerful tone of the original text cannot be reflected. Therefore, translators adopted an omitting and domesticating strategy. For the expression 发现典型, they deleted the sparrow image, but retained the symbolic meaning of the “prominent problem”.

In Example 8, we see the well-known example of the dragon, which has different cultural images in Chinese and English-speaking cultures. In China, the dragon is a sacred creature with high status and noble charisma. In this text, 九龙 refers to leaders, or management departments. But in western culture, the dragon features in many stories as a giant lizard, and is seen as a fierce and evil monster. When English-speaking readers see the phrase “nine dragons” in this text, they may therefore feel confused, thinking that the author is referring to something evil. Because of this potential for confusion, the dragon image in the expression 九龙 has not been translated directly, but is instead paraphrased as “too many government departments”.

3.2. The Conversion of Linguistic Meaning

Linguistic meaning is built on the relationships between languages in the system of linguistic signs, which is the least retained among the designative, linguistic, and pragmatic meanings. In *The Governance of China III*, it is mainly reflected in Sino-English linguistic differences, rhetorical devices, and syntax. In the area of linguistic meaning, the translator needs to consider both the informative function and the aesthetic function.

3.2.1. Linguistic Differences

In Chinese, the four-character structure, especially when conveying an idiom (成语chéng yǔ), is a distinctive form of expression. These four-character expressions not only contain the beauty of rhyme, and make political literature more concise, in terms of content and form, but also fully embody the spirit of the Chinese nation and the principles of national governance. However, English has no equivalent structure.

(9) 党中央是大脑和中枢，党中央必须有定于一尊、一锤定音的权威，这样才能“如身使臂，如臂使指，叱咤变化，无有留难，则天下之势一矣”。(p. 86)

The Central Committee, like the brain and main part of a body, must be *the sole authority that makes the final decisions*, so that it can control the subordinate parts just as “*the body employs the arms and the arms employ the fingers without any difficulty*, then the country runs as a whole”. (p. 108)

The Chinese phrase 定于一尊 means to regard the most respected or authoritative person as the only criterion (尊 usually means the person with the highest authority). 一锤定音 originally meant “to set the tune with one beat of the gong”, but it now refers to giving a decisive command. The translators have rendered these two Chinese idioms together as “the sole authority that makes the final decisions”, which is consistent with the original meaning, and is concise and comprehensive. However, the English translation lacks the momentum of the original Chinese. The phrase 如身使臂，如臂使指 is a classic saying in ancient Chinese books and records. It means that the government of a country should command freely, and should be able to execute

its decrees with no obstacles. The translators conveyed this expression in English using a similar two-part pattern: “the body employs the arms and the arms employ the fingers”, but beforehand, they insert an English paraphrase of 叱咤变化: “control the subordinate parts”, and translate 无有留难 as “without any difficulty” as a complement. In this way, they transformed the four-character structure into a complete sentence, with logical relationships, which embodies the features of parataxis in Chinese and hypotaxis in English, so as to achieve the effect of a consistent meaning and similar functions.

(10) 全党一定要保持艰苦奋斗、戒骄戒躁的作风，以时不我待、只争朝夕的精神，奋力走好新时代的长征路。(p. 54)

All of us in the Party must *work hard and live simply, guard against arrogance and impetuosity; and lose no time in progressing* along the long march of the new era. (p. 75)

In the Chinese, the expression 艰苦奋斗 belongs to the modifier-core structure. This has been translated as “work hard and live simply” - two adverbial phrases connected by “and”, which reproduce the form and the lexical meaning. 艰苦 is not translated as an adverb to modify the verb 奋斗 and its meaning becomes explicit, so the grammatical meaning is destroyed. The expression 戒骄戒躁 contains two parallel verb-object structures, but the translators considered that as both verbs are 戒, and English usually avoids repetition, so as to give the phrase a more English feel, they flexibly translated it as one phrasal verb “guard against” with parallel objects “arrogance and impetuosity”. 时不我待、只争朝夕 are referential tautologies, which imply an urgency of time and an urge to seize every opportunity to struggle. Here, the translators adopted quite a free translation, discarding the form of each sign and expressing just the meaning, without being verbose.

As the Chinese four-character structure is rich in form and meaning, in some cases the translators can render the phrase literally, retaining the lexical function as far as possible, so that the linguistic style and the functional expression are transferred to the English. But in other cases, a free translation may be adopted, with a Socio-semiotic approach focusing on conveying the meaning, to ensure the accuracy and conciseness of the English version, and to help foreign readers to understand.

3.2.2. Rhetorical Devices

On the lexical level, linguistic meaning in *The Governance of China III* can also refer to rhetorical devices, notably metaphor, antithesis, and allusion.

(11) 要保障黄河长久安澜，必须紧紧抓住水沙关系调节这个“牛鼻子”。(p. 378)

With this in mind, we must make every effort to adjust the sediment-water ratio of the Yellow River. (p. 439)

China’s civilization originated along its rivers, and agriculture has for long been an essential part of people’s lives. The cattle-drawn iron plough is an indispensable agricultural technology. To control the forward movement of the plough, the farmer pulls on a ring placed in a hole pierced in a bull’s nose. Later, the phrase 牛鼻子 is endowed with a metaphorical meaning, as the key to something. However, British culture in particular is celebrated for its maritime imagery, so English readers may be not familiar with this ancient farming method. The translators therefore used a reader-oriented strategy, and omitted the expression 牛鼻子. In this way, the cultural gap between the Chinese and the English is reduced, and target readers will not be puzzled by this metaphor.

(12) 纵观国际经贸发展史，深刻验证了“相通则共进，相闭则各退”的规律。各国削减壁垒、扩大开放，国际经贸就能打通血脉；如果以邻为壑、孤立封闭，国际经贸就会气滞血瘀。(p. 201)

The history of economic cooperation and international trade testifies to the fact that “*economies make progress through exchange and interconnectivity and fall behind because of isolation and seclusion*”. Efforts to reduce tariff barriers and open wider will lead to *interconnectivity* in economic cooperation and global trade, while engaging in beggar-thy-neighbor practices, isolation and seclusion will only result in trade *stagnation*. (p. 237)

The Chinese expression 相通则共进，相闭则各退 contains an antithesis, showing the beautiful uniform balance of the Chinese language. This sentence is also a moderate adaption of 穷则变，变则通，通则久 in the *Book of Changes*. It means that when things develop to the extreme, they will change, so that development will not be impeded, and progress can continue. Xi applies this image to the global economy, indicating that only by adapting and changing each other can countries achieve greater development. Isolation and lack of cooperation cannot lead to sustainable economic progress. Here, the translators chose a literal translation, to retain the features of the Chinese, and they added the subject “economies”, to give more specific context. The English not only corresponds to the original Chinese form, but also conveys Xi’s outlook on economic development more clearly. This translation serves both an informative and an aesthetic function.

打通血脉 and 气滞血瘀 are special terms in traditional Chinese medicine, which respectively refer to strengthening blood circulation and Qi-stagnation and blood stasis. Xi uses these terms to describe the relationship between international economics and trade, which is not only a vivid metaphor, but also demonstrates the profound culture of traditional Chinese medicine. The translators know that the target English audience is not familiar with the cultural background of traditional Chinese medicine. As this might prevent readers from understanding the concepts related to China’s economic development, to avoid increasing the burden on the audience, the translators have freely translated the essential connotation, to ensure the accuracy of the meaning.

3.2.3. Syntax

To convey linguistic meaning on the syntactic level, and to establish an equivalence between the original and the translation, it is important to analyze the syntactic features of both the Chinese and the English, and to be sensitive to the syntactic differences. The syntactic features of *The Governance of China III* include both differences in sentence structure and examples of parallelism.

(13) 营造良好政治生态是一项长期任务，必须作为党的政治建设的基础性、经常性工作，浚其源、涵其林，养正气、固根本，锲而不舍、久久为功。(p. 96)

Fostering a healthy political environment is a long-term task that must be made a basic and regular activity in reinforcing our Party’s political foundations. *Like tending the natural environment by clearing up the sources of waterways and cultivating forests, we need to make long, tenacious efforts to foster political integrity and build a strong foundation*. (p. 119)

The Chinese language emphasizes parataxis. There are few or no conjunctions, and to bring out the full meaning of the sentence, the relationship between the main clause and the subordinate clauses has to be understood. However, English is characterized by hypotaxis: it attaches importance to the logical relationship of phrases.

The Chinese sentence 浚其源、涵其林，养正气、固根本 comes from a well-known line of Wei Zheng, an outstanding politician and author of the Tang Dynasty. The line is 欲求木之长者，必

固其根本；欲流之远者，必浚其泉源, which means “For a tree to grow taller, its roots must be firmly stabilized; for a river to flow longer, its source must be dredged.” Xi analogizes the Party’s political construction with the ecological environment. He holds that creating a good political environment is the cornerstone of the Party’s healthy development, including the construction of a clean and honest administration, the anti-corruption struggle, the development of the political ability of leading officials, etc. The original text consists of just four parallel phrases, while in the English version the translators used a much longer explanation, bringing out the logical relationships, to try to fit the idiomatic usages of English readers. The non-predicate form of the verb is used as the adverbial of manner, and the main phrase represents the specific practice.

(14) 中国将始终是全球共同开放的重要推动者，中国将始终是世界经济增长的稳定动力源，中国将始终是各国拓展商机的活力大市场，中国将始终是全球治理改革的积极贡献者。(p. 203)

China will remain a strong advocate of openness at the global level, and will continue to act as a stable engine of global growth, a huge market with enormous opportunities, and an active supporter of reform in global governance. (p. 239)

Parallelism is a magnificent and harmonious form, which is often used in speeches as a rhetorical device. It can capture the attention of the audience, increasing their interest in the message and its meaning, and make them more aware of the construction of the passage. In the English version, the translators have not copied exactly the parallel structure of the original text, but instead, have changed the original subject-verb form into a verb-object structure, using “will remain” and “will continue”, which is more consistent with English style. Also, to avoid verbosity, they have used the phrase “will continue to act” to connect the following three objects, thus fully retaining the meaning of the original text, and also maintaining the momentum of the parallel structure.

3.3. The Conversion of Pragmatic Meaning

Pragmatic meaning is the relationship between linguistic signs and the users, and indicates the symbolic and socio-cultural meaning contained in the signs. It represents the attitude of the interpretant towards the signs. Compared with designative meaning and linguistic meaning, pragmatic meaning is usually implicit. In the process of translation, it is usually related to the culture and the context of the source language, the translator’s cognitive level, and the specific cultural orientation of the target language. In a case where the pragmatic meaning does not correspond between the original and the translation, the translators should adjust their methods, in order to adapt their version to include the missing cultural information. In The Governance of China III, pragmatic meaning is also embodied in the unique cultural signs in Chinese context, and highlights the expressive, informative, and vocative functions of this political text.

(15) 坚持中央和地方一盘棋。(p. 106)

Carry out institutional reform both at the central and local levels under *an overall plan*. (p. 130)

一盘棋 is a characteristically Chinese expression. Its designative meaning refers to the fact that the country is a unified organic whole, and all parts are interconnected, interdependent and coordinated, with strong cohesion. The literal English translation, “a chess board”, would weaken the readability of the English version, probably confusing readers about the relationship between central and local governments. The translators have omitted the “chess board” image, which is not used in this sense in western culture, interpreting it as “an overall

plan". This shows the strategic thinking by which the central and local governments take the interests of the whole country into account, and strengthen their solidarity and cooperation. Although this translation destroys the linguistic meaning, it achieves the pragmatic meaning. It not only retains Xi's strong appeal to unite governments at all levels around the country in the expressive meaning, but also helps English readers to picture the inseparable relationship between the central and local governments in China.

(16) 中华民族创造了灿烂的古代文明，形成了关于国家制度和国家治理的丰富理想，包括大道之行，天下为公的大同理想... (p. 119-120)

The Chinese nation has created a splendid civilization, and developed a wealth of ideas on state systems and governance, including: the ideal of great harmony believing that "When *the Great Way* rules, the land under Heaven belongs to the people". (p. 144)

(17) 增进战略互信。“大道之行，天下为公。”当前，中东面临消除和平之殇、破解发展之困的紧迫任务，中国的中东政策顺应中东人民追求和平、期盼发展的强烈愿望。(p. 481)

China and Arab states need to strengthen strategic trust. A Chinese adage has it that "*a just world* should be pursued for the common good". The Middle East faces the urgent task of removing the barriers to peace and resolving the development conundrum. People in the region yearn for peace and development. (p. 557)

(18) 大道至简，实干为要。面对世界经济格局的深刻变化，为了共同建设一个更加美好的世界，各国都应该拿出更大的勇气，积极推动开放合作，实现共同发展。(p. 201)

A great vision, simple and pure, requires credible actions. Given the profound shifts in the international economic landscape, the vision for a better world for all creates a call for countries to act with greater courage and actively champion openness and cooperation, in order to secure shared development. (p. 237)

The phrase 大道(dà dào) has been quoted many times in *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China III*. It is the main idea of Chinese Taoism and Chinese traditional cultural wisdom, which refers to the absolute truth of everything in the world. The pragmatic meanings of 道 are different, owing to the specific contexts in which it is quoted, and in each case the informational and communicative functions it carries are also different.

大道 in Example 16 has been translated literally as "the Great Way" with the initial letters capitalized. But from this, foreign readers may not grasp its meaning, so the translators have added the expression "the land under Heaven belongs to the people". Now the readers can associate this phrase with the principles and ways that achieve social equity and justice, to produce a practical effect. "Great" aptly encapsulates the highest ideals of Chinese politics. As for Example 17, Xi aims to safeguard peace and stability in the Middle East and the equity and justice in international affairs in the Arab countries through the Belt and Road cooperation strategy. The adage "a just world should be pursued for the common good" stresses China's appeal of mutual progress and shared achievements. Therefore, 大道 refers to the pursuit of just rules, principles or opportunities for development. This translation directly points out its connotation, clearly demonstrating the expression purpose by quoting the Chinese adage. In Example 18, the Xi's original intention is to claim that it is easy to set expected goals, but countries must apply a realistic and pragmatic approach and concentrate on the practice of economic development. Against a background of economic globalization, countries should actively cooperate, to work towards a goal of shared development. Therefore, 大道 implies the great prospect of economic development and common prosperity, and it is translated as "great vision". It not only retains the cultural connotation of the Chinese, but English readers can also clearly understand the meaning conveyed in the new context.

4. Conclusion

Nida (1986) clearly stated that translation is translating meaning, but translators should not consider the connotative meaning of language signs outside the sociocultural context. Because of the different cultural and social background of China and West, translators often have to take differences in meaning into account.

In the English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China III*, there are quite a few non-correspondences in terms of designative, linguistic, and pragmatic meanings. Designative and linguistic meanings are mostly embodied in the cultural realm. Problems of non-equivalence in designative meaning are mainly evident in the multiple referential meanings of a Chinese word, special political terms, and the absence of culturally equivalent terms, where polysemy of designative meaning is a difficult point, easily overlooked during the translation process. Secondly, in political literature, linguistic differences, rhetorical devices, and syntax highlight the linguistic meaning. Considering the differences between Chinese and English, translators need to make appropriate adjustments, to produce meaningful expressions for English audiences. The connotative, associative, and expressive meaning within pragmatic meaning is about the difference between obvious socio-cultural factors and the context, which makes the task of translating *The Governance of China III* more complex.

This study has also found that the English translation of *The Governance of China III* strives to improve audience awareness and communicate effectively on the basis of accurately and faithfully conveying the original Chinese concept, so the translators have used both domesticating and foreignizing strategies, and have adopted the methods of free translation, literal translation, literal translation of explication, omission, and adaptation. High quality English translation of political literature aims to provide foreign audiences with a true picture of Chinese politics and attach importance to the effects of communication. The Socio-semiotic approach takes account of external factors influencing translation, such as culture and context, and emphasizes the relationship between the source texts, the translators, the audience and the social and cultural background of the source and the target language. The designative, linguistic, and pragmatic meanings of the Socio-semiotic approach cover all the meanings that need to be communicated in the target language. By helping to properly inform the foreign audience about Chinese policies, and by giving China a powerful and effective voice, the Socio-semiotic approach to translation serves to enhance China's international communication capacity, increase its authority on the international stage, and build its own external discourse systems.

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