



A Study on the English Translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volume IV)* from the Perspective of Baker's Narrative Theory

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Abstract

Recently, the application of Mona Baker's narrative theory in political text translation has attracted increasing attention. The English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volume IV)* is a model of political text translation. This study delves into the English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volume IV)*, employing Mona Baker's narrative theory as a lens to analyze the translation process. It discusses four aspects, including temporal and spatial framing, framing by labelling, selective appropriation of textual material, and repositioning of participants. Findings reveal that narrative construction functions as a bridge in translation, ensuring the integrity of China's governance strategies while fostering their broad understanding and acceptance in the international community. The contribution of this paper lies in offering a comprehensive interpretation of the English translation of this important document, providing new perspectives and insights for research on intercultural narratives and the translation of diplomatic discourse.

Keywords

Narrative theory; *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China IV*; Mona Baker; framing narratives; narrative strategies

1. Introduction

In the contemporary globalized world, the translation of political discourse has emerged as a critical bridge connecting diverse cultures and ideologies. Narrative theory, particularly as articulated by Mona Baker, provides a nuanced lens through which to examine the translation of political texts. Baker posits that narratives are not static entities but dynamic constructs that evolve through interaction with their audience. In the context of translation, narratives are reinterpreted and reconstructed to align with the target culture's values and expectations (Baker, 2006). This theoretical perspective allows us to delve into the translator's role as a mediator who must navigate the delicate balance between fidelity to the source text and the creation of a coherent narrative for the English-speaking readership (Wang Keren, 2023).

"*Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*" is an essential political text comprehensively and systematically reflects the thought of socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a new era. Its translation and dissemination will help the international community to have a correct understanding of China's major policies and principles, and enable Chinese culture and thought to be introduced to the world. Therefore, this study embarks on an in-depth exploration of the English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volume IV)* a seminal work that encapsulates the political philosophy and governance strategies of President Xi Jinping. By adopting Mona Baker's narrative theory as our analytical framework, we aim to illuminate the intricate processes involved in translating political narratives across

different linguistic and cultural contexts. Additionally, we seek to provide new insights into the art of translation and its role in fostering cross-cultural understanding within the realm of political discourse.

2. Mona Baker's Narrative Theory and Translation of *Jinping: The Governance of China IV*

Baker defines framing as “an active process of signification by means of which we consciously participate in the construction of reality” (Baker, 2006). Based on this, Mona Baker proposed four narrative construction strategies and discussed the application of these strategies in translation practice.

- (1) Temporal and spatial framing: It means choosing a specific text and placing it in a different temporal and spatial context, so as to enhance the narrative effect and encourage people to associate this specific text with the current narrative (Baker, 2006).
- (2) Selective appropriation of textual material: It is achieved in the way of omission and addition. It is used to suppress, accentuate, or elaborate particular aspects of a narrative encoded in the source text or utterance, or aspects of the larger narrative(s) in which it is embedded (Baker, 2006).
- (3) Framing by labelling: It refers to “any discursive process that involves using a lexical item, term or phrase to identify a person, place, group, event or any other key elements in a narrative” (Baker, 2006).
- (4) Repositioning of Participants: It means that in the process of translation, translators can use “the linguistic management of time, space, deixis, dialect, register, use of epithets, and various means of self-and other identification” to reframe the relationship between “here and there, now and then, them and us, reader and narrator, reader and translator, hearer and interpreted” (Baker, 2006).

The key point of Baker's narrative theory lies in the concept of narrative agency, which refers to the active role of both the storyteller and the audience in the construction of meaning. In translation, this notion extends to the translator, who becomes a co-creator of the narrative as it is adapted to fit the target culture (Baker, 2006). This perspective challenges the traditional view of translation as a passive and mechanical process, instead positioning it as a creative and interpretative endeavor.

Mona Baker's narrative theory has opened up a new way for translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China IV*, and this book itself is a typical example of the combination of narrative theory and translation practice. As a work of both policy and theory, it not only contains rich policy content but also contains profound thoughts and emotions.

3. An Analysis of Narrative Framing in the Translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China IV*

3.1 Temporal and Spatial Framing

Temporal and spatial framing refers to the repetition of historical events in the past under the current new historical background. The narrative purpose of this strategy is to achieve the narrative effect and arouse the resonance of the readers. *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volume 4)* contains a large number of historical events, historical figures, and character experiences. In consideration of the diverse geographical origins, social identities, and cultural backgrounds of our target audience, translators are required to employ versatile translation techniques, such as expansion or augmentation, to adapt the content effectively. This ensures that the original message is comprehensible to the readers while fulfilling the narrative objectives.

The successful temporal and spatial framing evident in translations concerning China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) exemplifies a seamless integration of the nation's historical trade and cultural exchange roots along the historic Silk Road with its contemporary global connectivity vision. By skillfully anchoring the BRI in this rich legacy, translators highlight its potential to catalyze worldwide collaboration and shared economic growth. Enhanced through vivid depictions of the physical routes and iconic landmarks associated with the initiative, the translated narratives conjure an image of a modern Silk Road spanning continents and diverse societies. In doing so, they elegantly bridge the temporal divide between China's past and present, while simultaneously transcending geographical divides to unite global regions.

Furthermore, temporal and spatial framing in the translation process also involves the adaptation of temporal expressions and spatial references that may not directly correspond in English. For instance, the translation of “the New Democratic Revolution (1919-1949), actually, “from 1919 to 1949” is not mentioned in the original Chinese phrases, the method of additional translation is adopted here. The target readers will know that the period of the new democratic revolution is from 1919 to 1949. The New Democratic Revolution, this historical event in the context of the

100th anniversary of the founding of the communist party of China, the translator, through temporal and spatial framing, can make the target language readers fully feel the communist party of China achieve socialism is not easy, and highlight the confidence and determination of the communist party of China to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Similarly, spatial terms that carry specific cultural connotations, such as "the motherland" or "the land under the sky," need to be translated in a way that conveys their emotional depth and national pride. The translator must find equivalent expressions in English that capture the sentiment and grandeur of the original Chinese phrases, ensuring that the translated text maintains its rhetorical power and cultural resonance.

3.2 Selective Appropriation of Textual Material

In the process of translation, the original materials are selected to highlight, enhance, or suppress some aspects of the current narrative, which directly affects the narrative level of the translation activities. The translator's decisions hold significant weight in sculpting or circumscribing the narrative progression. In the rendition of 'Xi Jinping: The Governance of China,' a strategic methodology is employed, which involves a judicious selection and nuanced interpretation of source material. This approach aims to accentuate specific aspects of the source content, based on their relevance and potential impact on the English-speaking audience. It necessitates a meticulous process that balances the retention of vital information with a purposeful reconfiguration of the narrative, ensuring its resonance with readers while staying loyal to the fundamental themes and principles of the original text. In the context of translating political discourse, selective appropriation becomes a tool for the translator to navigate the intricate web of cultural, political, and linguistic nuances. It requires a deep understanding of both the source and target cultures, allowing the translator to make informed decisions about which parts of the text should be foregrounded and how they should be presented to achieve maximum coherence and impact.

The translator's decisions hold significant weight in sculpting or circumscribing the narrative progression. In the translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, a strategic methodology is employed, which involves a judicious selection and nuanced interpretation of source material. This approach aims to accentuate specific aspects of the source content, based on their relevance and potential impact on the English-speaking audience. It necessitates a meticulous process that balances the retention of vital information with a purposeful reconfiguration of the narrative, ensuring its resonance with readers while staying loyal to the fundamental themes and principles of the original text.

Nonetheless, discerning adaptation in cultural representation extends beyond accentuating select themes; it necessitates the thoughtful modification or clarification of culturally specific nuances, which may elude English-speaking audiences. This may involve incorporating footnotes or endnotes to elucidate historical events, traditional practices, or profound philosophical tenets embedded in Chinese society yet less familiar to global readers. These annotations serve to bridge the cultural divide, enhancing comprehension without unduly complicating the narrative.

One critical aspect of selective cultural appropriation involves the transposition of metaphors and rhetoric typical of Chinese political discourse. Given their rich cultural and historical context, these elements present a nuanced translation challenge. To effectively convey their meaning in English, translators must skillfully employ equivalent metaphors or provide clear, direct explanations, thereby necessitating a profound understanding of both languages' rhetorical nuances and cultural contexts.

For instance, in this sentence: "Li Baoguo, who dedicated himself to poverty alleviation in the Taihang Mountains for 35 years, like the "foolish old man" in the ancient fable who conquered the mountains through his persistence.

The underlined part is an addition to the original text. In original sentence, "Yugong" refers to the hero of *Yugong Yishan* in Chinese myths and legends. All Chinese people know that "Yu Gong" is used as a metaphor for people who are tenacious and not afraid of difficulties. By using metaphors, Xi Jinping has praised Li Baoguo for 35 years. For the target language readers who do not understand traditional Chinese culture, not only do not know who Yu Gong is, but also have trouble to understand the word "new Yu Gong". If the word is translated as "new foolish old man", the target language readers will be confused. Therefore, the translator, by adding more words to the text, can not only enable the target language readers to understand the character of "Yu Gong" and the traditional Chinese culture but also further appreciate the persevering spirit of China in the fight against poverty.

The process of selective appropriation of textual material reflects the dynamic and flexible nature of narrative strategies. It requires the translator to maintain the spirit of the original work while having a deep understanding of the cultural background and reading expectations of the target audience, thus achieving the reorganization and re-creation of the materials in the translation process. Through this strategy, the translator can effectively convey the

profound ideas contained in *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volume IV)*, while respecting cultural differences, thus enabling China's governance philosophy to be vividly presented on the international stage and providing global readers with a unique window through which to understand Chinese narratives (Yang, D. L. & Zhao, X. Y., 2012).

3.3 Framing by Labelling

Framing by labelling refers to any process involving the use of vocabulary items, proper nouns, or phrases to define names, places, group names, events, or other key elements in narratives. Naming and titling are powerful constructive tools. In *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volume IV)* and its English translation, naming and titling constructions involving political affairs and appellative language are common indicative means.

The reconstruction of the narrative in the title translation is usually accompanied by subtle changes within the text to match the narrative position of the new title (Zhao X. Y., 2017). For instance, “Let China’s Openness Benefit the World” is the title of a speech delivered by General Secretary Xi Jinping at the opening ceremony of the 4th China International Import Expo on November 4, 2021. The original direct translation version is “Let the Open Spring Breeze Warm the world”. The title uses metaphorical rhetoric, comparing the “Benefits” of opening up to the outside world to the “Spring Breeze” that benefits the world, thus showing China's determination to work with the international community to build an open world economy. For the word “chun feng”, if it is translated directly into “Spring Breeze”, it will cause confusion to the target language readers. Therefore, the translator reveals the figurative meaning through the translation method of free translation, thus removing the reading barrier for the target language readers.

To identify the core ideas, the translator needs to accurately translate and retain the identity language of the original, “Chinese Dream” will also have a distinct identity and cultural connotation in English. At the same time, in order to increase acceptance, the translation may be accompanied by explanatory texts, such as the proposed vision of national prosperity and personal well-being, as indicated where appropriate. Cross-cultural adaptation becomes an important consideration in identity construction. On the basis of respecting the target culture, the translator needs to find the corresponding signs to reduce the cultural estrangement. For example, “targeted poverty reduction” is interpreted as a strategy aimed at accurately identifying and helping the poor, so that English readers can understand and accept this development path with Chinese characteristics.

In translation practice, framing by labelling is an important means by which the translator keeps the label of the source text while adapting to the target culture and enhancing readability and understanding. It helps readers grasp core concepts quickly by creating easy-to-understand and deep-memory marks, thus playing a role in strengthening information dissemination and deepening understanding of cross-cultural narratives. The English translation *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volume IV)*, through framing by labelling, successfully identifies key elements of Chinese statecraft for global readers and promotes the effective dissemination of Chinese stories on the international stage.

3.4 Repositioning of Participants

Repositioning of Participants is a narrative strategy based on the feature of relevance. The translator generally maintains or strengthens the original position of the participant by relocating in the annotations of the paratext, text, or discourse.

For instance, “We should continue to connect and coordinate reforms in medical treatment, medical insurance, and medical supply”. “Medical supply” brings a comprehension barrier for the target language reader. Therefore, the translator expresses the meaning of the word through literal translation and annotation like this: “This refers to a people-centered approach to public health, by making reforms in medical treatment, medical insurance, and medicine supply more holistic, systematic and coordinated through legal, administrative and market means. It aims to boost public health and medical services, improve the multilevel medical security system, and regulate the supply of medicine and medical consumables.”

In this way, the target language readers can not only understand the rich experience of Chinese medical governance but also realize the repositioning of characters and events through the detailed interpretation of this word in the notes. This repositioning in the subtext strengthens the narrative effect.

In addition, translators need to be selective in presenting international figures and events to ensure that they are both meaningful and resonant to the English-speaking reader. For example, when the General Secretary Xi Jinping discusses global governance, he may quote from international conferences or other national leaders. In translation, the translator may choose international events that are more familiar to English-speaking readers, such as the G20

summit, or translate the words of foreign leaders into expressions that are more appropriate to the English language, to increase the intimacy of English readers.

In translation practice, the repositioning strategy of characters and events requires not only the translator's deep understanding of the source text but also their cross-cultural sensitivity and adaptability. This strategy not only ensures that the image of Chinese leaders is accurately and effectively presented to English readers, but it also enables international readers to understand and accept Chinese development stories and global governance concepts from a broader cultural perspective.

4. Conclusion

Xi Jinping: The Governance of China has played an important role in explaining the Party's innovative theories, in inspiring people to work harder, and in presenting China to the rest of the world. They have thereby opened a window for the international community to better understand China. In order to make the target language readers understand China better, the translators of this work try their best to present the original source text and give the best translation. The translation of the political text "*Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*" fully reflects the application of narrative theory and narrative construction strategies proposed by Mona Baker and others in the translation of political texts, it has also made great contributions to telling the Chinese story, spreading the Chinese voice and building a good image of China.

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