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## **Institutional Versus Individual Translations of Chinese Political Texts: A Corpus-based Critical Discourse Analysis**

**Feng Pan, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan**

**Kyung Hye Kim, Shanghai Jiao Tong University**

**Tao Li, Shanghai Ocean University**

### **ABSTRACT**

The intricate relationship between institution, translation and ideology has always been an area of contention among translation scholars. This study aims to investigate the ideology involved in the translation practice of a Chinese government-affiliated institution — the Foreign Languages Publishing Administration (FLPA). Drawing on Fairclough's (1995) model of Critical Discourse Analysis, this study examines two series of Chinese political documents translated by the Chinese government-affiliated institution, through comparative analysis with those translated by an individual UK-based translator. Using both comparable and parallel corpora, the analysis reveals three types of shifts regularly made in the institutional translations, namely shifts in interacting with readers, in representing actions, and in identifying participants. In contrast, a rather literal rendition is discovered in the translations by the individual translator. Further analysis of institutional practice shows that these shifts by institutional translators are conducted in accordance with the institution's 'Three Principles of Adherence' for international publicity. This study ultimately argues that the mediation is framed closely within the institution's ideological purpose of 'presenting China to the world'.

### **KEYWORDS**

Chinese political discourse, institutional translation, ideology, CDA, corpus.

## **1. Introduction**

Translation of Chinese political discourse, often regarded as high-quality and authoritative by the government and the public (e.g. Chen 2014: 9, Li and Li 2015: 425-426), has been subject to controversy and has drawn extensive attention from translation practitioners and scholars in China. In 2010, for example, Wu, a professor in translation at Beijing International Studies University, argued that the officially-released translation of the Chinese Government Work Report for that year contained much redundancy and that this had compromised the translation quality. This assertion was soon countered by Wang (2011), a senior in-house translation expert, who, while acknowledging Wu's insight, refuted most of Wu's arguments by

asserting that Wu's claims were solely rooted in a linguistic consideration, and that Wu had not considered the fact that there are other political factors to consider when translating political texts. Similar controversies like this have arisen. Another round of public debates between Wang (2016) and other scholars (e.g. Tang 2012, Yang and Li 2015) soon followed that raised issues such as 'collocational conflicts' and 'political equivalence' in the translation of Chinese political discourse. They are certainly not the first of its kind.

Against this backdrop, such research questions arise as "what ideological considerations are taken into account in institutional translations of Chinese political discourse?", "what actors are involved in the translation process and what kinds of criteria are applied by the translating institution(s)?", and "what are the distinctive features of these officially accredited translations?". To address these questions, the present study undertook a critical analysis of two series (each having three separate texts) of political documents produced by the Communist Party of China (CPC) and their officially-released English translations by the Foreign Languages Publication Administration (FLPA) based in Beijing through comparison with those translated by an individual translator who specialises in Chinese Studies and worked then at Oxford University. The FLPA is an institution set up by the CPC Central Committee to undertake the task of international communication for the CPC and the CPC-led Chinese government. As the oldest and largest of its kind in China mainland, the FLPA regularly organises, edits, publishes, and releases translations of an array of Chinese sources, particularly political texts such as the Party leaders' works or the Party's documents, into many other languages (e.g. English, French, German, Spanish, and Arabic). The investigation into the FLPA's practice is expected to provide valuable insights into institutional translation of political discourse in general, particularly the translation practice of government institutions.

## **2. Translations in institutional context**

Since Mossop (1988) introduced the term 'institutional translation', this phrase has been widely used in Translation Studies to refer to "any translation carried out in the name, on behalf of, and for the benefit of institutions" (Gouadec 2007: 36). So far, a number of studies have been conducted into translations in various institutional settings, particularly the media websites, news agencies or political institutions.

An intimate yet complex relationship between translation and institution has been argued by a number of scholars in the field. At a more macro level, the formulation of translation policies, the endowment of translation rights for certain social groups as well as how translation practice is carried out in institutional settings are usually found framed within institutional agendas. This is supported by studies on institutional translation in monolingual countries including those with a relatively homogeneous population, such as South Korea (Kang 2007, Kim 2017), and those with a hegemonic official language and other regional minority languages, such as the UK (Núñez 2016), multilingual countries such as Belgium and Canada (Gagnon 2010, Meylaerts 2013, Mossop 1988), and international/supranational organisations, such as the EU or the UN (Koskinen 2008, Schäffner *et al.* 2014, Svoboda *et al.* 2017, Prieto Ramos 2018). At a more micro level, detailed analyses of translation products by specific translating institutions have generally revealed the shaping role of institutional orientation on a translator's output. Focusing mostly on various government-related institutions, news agencies or international institutions, the majority of these studies demonstrate that the translators' decision-making process and resultant translations reflect the voice or goals of the institution for which they produce the translations (e.g. Kang 2007, Schäffner 2012). Yet, exceptional cases have also been reported. For example, Munday's (2007) study of Cuban institutional translations of Castro's proclamation shows that the translated texts in fact deviate from the voice conveyed by the source text through a distinct transitivity pattern. In the study Munday argues that the shifts identified may not necessarily be motivated by the translators' ideological position as defined by the institution which they work for but may also arise from cognitively less conscious translation choices. In addition, Harding's (2014) examination of translations by Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Publishing as a translating institution shows that while most of the translated outputs are aligned with the narrative of the government to which the institution is affiliated, there are also a few exceptions that introduce alternative narratives and voices. Overall, these findings point to the "delicate and complicated" (Kang 2014: 476) nature of translations within institutional settings, calling for further corroboration of results.

On the other hand, within the Chinese context, a few studies have recently been devoted to exploring translator's positioning within certain news agencies or media organisations through an analytical approach to translated discourse (Pan 2015, Wu and Zhang 2015). However, studies on translations of Chinese political discourse have mostly been approached from a prescriptive point of view, discussing the appropriate translation methods or strategies, the optimal translation choices, or assessment of

translation quality as noted in the introduction. A few exceptions are Li and Li's (2015) and Li and Xu's (2018) descriptive investigations of translations of Chinese political texts. While the former limits itself to a general account of the institutional translation practice in China without providing direct evidence from specific institutions, the latter is devoted to the linguistic perspective largely neglecting the context of production. Consequently, the lack of sufficient empirical evidence on the actual institutional translation practice of political discourse calls for more systematic and in-depth examination of institutional contexts in China.

### **3. Ideology in translation and Critical Discourse Analysis**

Ideology, understood as a "set of beliefs and values which inform an individual's or institution's view of the world and assist their interpretation of events, facts and other aspects of experience" (Mason 2010: 86), has been a major concern of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is a theoretical approach of language study that investigates the relationship between text and the sociocultural context within which it is embedded. It aims to examine the ways social inequality and dominance are encoded in, reproduced and resisted by discourse in a certain social cultural context (van Dijk 2001: 352), and how discourse serves to produce and maintain existing social structures. Particularly, it is interested in "revealing structures of power and unmasking ideologies" (Wodak and Meyer 2009: 8) behind those seemingly innocent and value-free texts by identifying patterned language use. The identification of different linguistic patterns, e.g. content, linguistic features, or discursive function, is usually assisted by exploiting a number of analytical concepts, such as those from systemic-functional grammar. Put simply, CDA intends primarily to discover how discourse is structured in particular ways as to perform certain social functions.

Translation Studies, on the other hand, by resorting to CDA, has also developed a major interest in the ideological issues affecting translating since the 1990s (see Calzada Pérez 2003). From the perspective of CDA, translation can be viewed as a social practice which inevitably shapes and is shaped by power relations between its various participants. So far, CDA has been utilised extensively in discussing a translator's stance in a variety of translation works, such as those by specific institutions, and proved effective in revealing the hidden ideology or power relations behind those subtle yet crucial translational choices (e.g. Calzada Pérez 2003, Kang 2007, Mason 2010). This study will draw upon CDA to examine what intentions or

ideologies are encoded in translations of Chinese political discourse and how a translated discourse may serve its producer's interest.

## 4. Data and research design

### 4.1. An analytical model of discourse

Fairclough's (1995) model of CDA, which comprises three dimensions for construing communicative events, namely text, discursive practice, and social practice, is adopted for the analysis. Discourse is understood here as "the whole process of social interaction of which text is just a part" (Fairclough 2001: 20). This analytical model follows three procedures in analysing any discourse: the first is text analysis, involving describing linguistic properties of a text on its phonological, lexical, grammatical or semantic levels. Text analysis is performed on translated political discourse by identifying and describing 'shifts' through comparison of target texts (TTs) and source texts (STs). This is done because shifts in translation are a result of the translators' mediation which is indicative of their ideological positioning. Shifts here refer to changes of linguistic choices found in translations, motivated optionally on the part of translators rather than dictated by systemic differences between languages. Halliday's (2000) systemic-functional grammar (SFG) is referenced for analytical concepts of linguistic description, such as *transitivity*, *mood* and *modality*. The results from the analysis of linguistic shifts are then interpreted in the second procedure of processing analysis. It probes into the discursive process adopted when the translated texts were produced, with a consideration of the translators' mediation of texts to accommodate a new readership distinct from that of the original. Specifically, in this procedure, the analysis of discursive process is carried out with an eye to "the process of production, of which the text is a product" (Fairclough 2001: 20). Lastly, the relationship between discursive practice and social process is explained in the third procedure of social analysis by taking into account the factors in the larger socio-political context responsible for the mediation. In other words, the social analysis aims to reveal how the discursive process is socially determined by examining the social structures, conditions or relations that underlie the way in which discourse as a social practice is generated and shaped (Fairclough 2001: 135-138). Here, the discursive and social analyses are informed by data from an interview conducted by the authors with Youyi Huang, the former vice director of the FLPA, and from email communications with Rogier Creemers, complemented with an analysis of relevant literature on the institution's translation practice and the socio-political context.

## **4.2. Research data**

The corpus built for this study consists of three separate sub-corpora: the Chinese STs, their translations by the FLPA and by a high-profile academic in Chinese Studies based at Oxford University. The ST sub-corpus collects two series of documents (six separate texts in total) released by the Central Committee of the CPC in 2013 and 2014, respectively, officially translated as “Documents of the Third (Fourth) Plenary Session of the 18<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the Communist Party of China” by the FLPA. These documents carried special political weight at that time as they represent the latest governing policies introduced by the new Chinese leadership under Xi Jinping, who was elected as the General Secretary of the CPC by delegates of the 18<sup>th</sup> CPC National Congress held in late 2012 and as President of the People’s Republic of China soon afterwards. Their contents mainly concern resolutions of the CPC Central Committee regarding “some major issues concerning comprehensively deepening the Reform” and “major issues concerning comprehensively advancing the law-based governance of China”. Their targeted audiences are lower-level Party members and government officials, who are supposed to comply with these instructions. The third sub-corpus collects translations carried out by the individual translator Rogier Creemers, a Belgian scholar in Chinese Studies at Oxford University and amateur translator. Dr Creemers regularly releases his translations of various texts on China on his own personal blog (<http://chinacopyrightandmedia.wordpress.com/>), including news articles, legal texts and political documents. He believed his audience to be “professionals who require knowledge about China, primarily for business or political purposes” (email communication). As seen from the reviews and comments of the translations published, his webpage does have attracted a large number of visitors from both the UK and other countries. He claimed his Chinese to be mid-level with which he could function relatively well in a professional context and his English proficiency to be near-native (email communication). He also reported to have used Wenlin, a Chinese learning and translation-assisting software with embedded Chinese-English dictionary, to facilitate his translation. He is an experienced translator and had translated around 1000 texts from Chinese to English by October 2016. As a result, the quality of his translations is guaranteed to some extent.

These Chinese documents are chosen for study because they are the only Chinese political texts found to be simultaneously translated by a government institution and by an individual translator up to the time the paper was written. Meanwhile, these texts under study are part of the core

political documents of the CPC and typical of Chinese political discourse. As each of the two translation versions has over 50,000 tokens, respectively (see Table 1), a corpus approach is adopted because it facilitates the identification of regular patterns in the two corpora of TTs for contrastive analysis so as to arrive at generalisability as far as possible regarding institutional translation of Chinese political texts. That is to say, by offering quantitative data, the corpus approach helps us focus specifically on those features with regularity that are the outcome of translator's mediation.

All the electronic documents were checked manually for accuracy first, before being aligned sentence by sentence using ParaConc (Barlow 2009). The specifications of the corpus are summarised in Table 1.

	Chinese source texts	Institutional translations	Creemers' translations
Types	1377	3970	3598
Tokens	42158	55152	50069

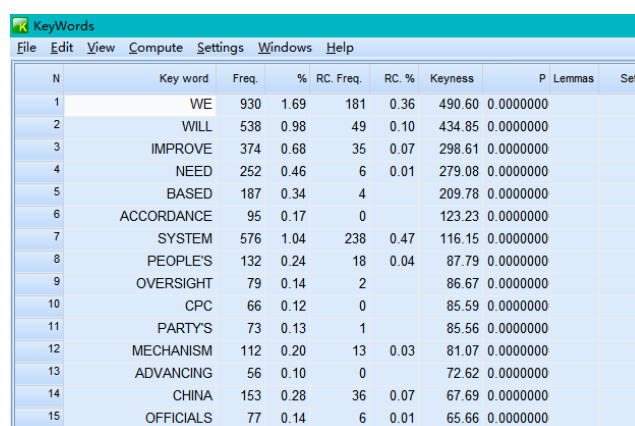
**Table 1 The corpus design and specifications**

#### 4.3. Research procedures

With Creemers' translations as the reference corpus, the text analysis starts with an examination of the keywords list for the institutional translations with WordSmith 6.0 (Scott 2014), a software package for linguistic analysis, searching for features of ideological value. The term 'keywords' refers to "words which occur unusually frequently in comparison with some kind of reference corpus" (Scott 2014); they are generated by comparing the wordlists of the two sub-corpora of TTs. Specifically, positive keywords refer to those words which are unusually more frequent in the observed corpus, while negative keywords are those that occur much less frequently than in the reference corpus. In WordSmith, the positive keywords, the keyness of which is in positive numbers, would show up at the top half of the Keywords interface, while negative keywords, the keyness of which is in negative numbers, would appear at the bottom side and in red font (see Figures 1 and 2). Due to space limit, however, the study only focuses on the top 15 positive keywords. An initial measure was adopted to refine the positive keywords list by comparing them with the negative keywords list, as a number of different occurrences on the two lists could be combined together. For example, *accordance* and *according* appear separately in the two lists as distinct word forms. Similar cases include: *system* vs *systems*, *mechanism* vs *mechanisms* (numeral difference); *oversight* vs *supervision*,



*China* vs *country* (*country* ranks 30<sup>th</sup> in the negative keywords list), *advancing* vs *move* and *moving* (choice of synonyms); *Party's* and *Party* (different grammatical cases). A closer look into the parallel texts, i.e. the Chinese texts and their English translations that are aligned using ParaConc, reveals that: *based* is derived from the Chinese affix -*化* which is mostly translated by Creemers with the English affix -*ised* (e.g. *law-based* vs *legalisation*); *CPC* in the institutional translations finds its counterparts in Creemers' as *CCP* or *(the) Party* or *Chinese Communist Party*. After removing those irrelevant words, the refined list is left with the following items: *we*, *will*, *improve*, *need*, *people's*, and *officials*, which shall serve as the focal point of our textual analysis. As argued by Fairclough, "modality" in texts can be significant as it "shows how one represents the world and thus how one identifies oneself and necessarily in relation to others with whom one is interacting" (2003: 166). Further, choice on agents (e.g. *we*, *people's*, *officials*) or the way actions are represented (e.g. *improve*) often has ideological implications (e.g. Fairclough 2001, Pan 2015).



N	Key word	Freq.	%	RC. Freq.	RC. %	Keyness	P Lemmas	Set
1	WE	930	1.69	181	0.36	490.60	0.0000000	
2	WILL	538	0.98	49	0.10	434.85	0.0000000	
3	IMPROVE	374	0.68	35	0.07	298.61	0.0000000	
4	NEED	252	0.46	6	0.01	279.08	0.0000000	
5	BASED	187	0.34	4		209.78	0.0000000	
6	ACCORDANCE	95	0.17	0		123.23	0.0000000	
7	SYSTEM	576	1.04	238	0.47	116.15	0.0000000	
8	PEOPLE'S	132	0.24	18	0.04	87.79	0.0000000	
9	OVERSIGHT	79	0.14	2		86.67	0.0000000	
10	CPC	66	0.12	0		85.59	0.0000000	
11	PARTY'S	73	0.13	1		85.56	0.0000000	
12	MECHANISM	112	0.20	13	0.03	81.07	0.0000000	
13	ADVANCING	56	0.10	0		72.62	0.0000000	
14	CHINA	153	0.28	36	0.07	67.69	0.0000000	
15	OFFICIALS	77	0.14	6	0.01	65.66	0.0000000	

**Figure 1. Top 15 positive keywords based on translations by the FLPA against translations by Creemers**

63	PARTY	309	0.56	438	0.87	-36.11	0.0000000
64	ETC	5		42	0.08	-36.82	0.0000000
65	EVEN	8	0.01	52	0.10	-40.26	0.0000000
66	STRENGTHEN	105	0.19	203	0.40	-41.53	0.0000000
67	FUNCTION	7	0.01	51	0.10	-41.88	0.0000000
68	SUPERVISION	33	0.06	119	0.24	-59.98	0.0000000
69	MECHANISMS	97	0.18	224	0.45	-64.22	0.0000000
70	PLENUM	38	0.07	141	0.28	-73.05	0.0000000
71	ENTIRE	10	0.02	85	0.17	-74.93	0.0000000
72	REIN	4		75	0.15	-84.62	0.0000000
73	PERSIST	10	0.02	126	0.25	-128.20	0.0000000
74	COMPLETE	25	0.05	174	0.35	-139.82	0.0000000
75	MOVE	10	0.02	135	0.27	-140.22	0.0000000
76	MOVING	3		114	0.23	-144.89	0.0000000
77	CONSTRUCTION	18	0.03	182	0.36	-172.06	0.0000000
78	SYSTEMS	93	0.17	423	0.84	-261.17	0.0000000
79	S	13	0.02	242	0.48	-272.98	0.0000000
80	FORWARD	35	0.06	329	0.65	-302.93	0.0000000
81	PERFECT	4		232	0.46	-308.66	0.0000000
82	ACCORDING	15	0.03	292	0.58	-332.75	0.0000000

KWs

plot

links

clusters

filenames

source text

notes

82 entries

Row 82

**Figure 2. Top 20 negative keywords based on translations by the FLPA against translations by Creemers**

## 5. Analysis of textual shifts

The parallel analysis of the refined keywords list reveals three types of shifts in the institutional translations, namely shifts in interacting with readers, in representing actions, and in identifying participants, illustrated and analysed in the following sections.

### 5.1. Shifts in interacting with readers

According to SFG, a clause can be organised as an interactive event or simply an exchange (Halliday 2000: 68-71), which has a vital role to play in establishing and maintaining social and personal relations. However, ways of interacting with readers as manifested in the STs are frequently found mediated by institutional translators in our comparative analysis of the items in the refined keywords list, namely *need*, *we* and *will*, which function in the TT to attenuate the rigid and categorical tone in the ST. This is done by either modulating prescriptive expressions or modalising asserting expressions (see *modalisation* and *modulation* in Halliday 2000: 89).

#### Example 1

**ST:** 牢固树立有权力就有责任, 有权利就有义务观念. 加强社会诚信建设, 健全公民和组织守法信用记录, 完善守法诚信褒奖机制和违法失信行为惩戒机制, 使尊法守法成为全体人民共同追求和自觉行动.

**[Back translation:** Solidly set up the idea there is power there is responsibility, there are rights, there are obligations. Reinforce the construction of social honesty,

complete the recording of legal compliance and credit of citizens and organisations, perfect mechanisms for awarding legal compliance and credibility and mechanisms for punishing law-breaking and promise-breaching behaviour, let respecting the law and abiding by the law become a common pursuit and conscious act of all the people.]

**Institutional Translations (IT):** We need to keep firmly in mind that with power comes responsibility, and with rights come obligations. We need to increase public integrity, improve the recording of information about citizens' and organisations' compliance with the law and credibility, and refine mechanisms that reward those who obey the law and are credible and punish those who break the law or lack credibility so that all our people consciously act to respect and abide by the law.

**Creemers' translations (CT):** Firmly establish the idea that where there is power, there is responsibility, and where there are rights, there are obligations. Strengthen the construction of social honesty, complete legal compliance credit records of citizens and organisations, perfect commendation mechanisms for abiding by the law and punitive mechanisms for violating the law and breaking promises, make respecting the law and abiding by the law into a common pursuit and conscious act of the whole body of the people.

#### Example 2

**ST:** 规范媒体对案件的报道, 防止舆论影响司法公正. 依法规范司法人员与当事人, 律师, 特殊关系人, 中介组织的接触, 交往行为.

**[Back translation:** Standardise media's coverage of cases, prevent public opinion influence judicial justice. In accordance with the law standardise the contact, interaction between judicial personnel and litigants, lawyers, person with special interest, and intermediary agencies.]

**IT:** We need to standardise media coverage of cases to prevent judicial impartiality from being influenced by public opinion. We need, in accordance with the law, to regulate contact between those working in the judiciary and litigants, lawyers, special interested persons, and intermediary agencies.

**CT:** Standardise media reporting over cases, prevent that public opinion influences judicial fairness. Standardise the links and interactions between judicial personnel and the parties, lawyers, people with particular relationships and intermediary organisations according to the law.

In Chinese political genres, speeches or texts are primarily speaker-centred with limited interaction with readers, typically realised by adopting an assertive or imperative tone, with a view to influencing attitudes and beliefs (Li and Li 2015, Zhang 2004). In example 1, talking about the policies on "fostering awareness about the rule of law", the ST uses two unmarked imperative sentences signalled by zero subjects. This is "not only generated by the subject-ellipsis characteristic of the Chinese language" (Li and Li 2015: 432), but also political rhetoric to establish authority and ensure

ideological indoctrination. Semantically, the sentences serve as a command prescribing someone to comply with the stated instructions, e.g. to “set up the idea”. In this context, utterances like these can be regarded as guidelines or orders issued by the CPC Central Committee towards lower level Party organs and officials, who are the intended recipients. It can be assumed that it is ‘you’ — the readers who are supposed to follow the command. By adopting imperatives, the Party, showing no textual presence, selects the role of giving command and assigns to readers the role of undertaking it.

Unlike Creemers’ translation, which reproduces the original imperatives with corresponding English imperatives, the translation produced by the FLPA transforms them into declarative sentences. Note here that the pronoun *we* in the TT is inclusive to encompass the readers, thus signalling closeness with them. Still, the addition of the deontic *need* also mitigates the ST’s categorical tone by modulating its prescriptive expressions, since modulation construes the intermediate degrees between prescribing and proscribing, i.e. the positive and negative poles in a proposal (Halliday 2000: 89). As a result, the command that is sensed in the ST towards readers is shifted into an obligation on the part of both parties of the interaction. Likewise, the same shifts of transforming the ST’s imperative tone into a modulated one by institutional translators through adding deontic *need* and inclusive *we* can be observed in example 2, where the ST specifies measures on “tightening oversight over judicial activities”.

#### Example 3

**ST:** 停顿和倒退没有出路, 改革开放只有进行时, 没有完成时.

[**Back translation:** Pausing and falling-back have no way out, reform and opening up only has progressive tense, has no perfect tense.]

**IT:** We will reach an impasse if we stall and go into reverse on our path, and reform and opening up only transpires in the progressive sense - there is no end to it.

**CT:** There is no way out in pausing and withdrawing, reforming and opening up only has a progressive tense, it does not have a perfect tense.

Further, asserting expressions, illustrated in example 3 (i.e. *pausing and falling-back have no way out*), are also transformed into modalised and more interpersonalised utterances in the institutional translation. The addition of the implicitly subjective modal *will*, encoding the writer’s epistemic judgment, makes the writer’s engagement in the claim visible. In addition, as opposed to the impersonal tone adopted in Creemers’ translation, the institutional translation makes the assertion particularised by applying the inclusive *we* to involve the readers in the judgment. This

interpersonal aspect is reinforced by the sequence of two subsequent first personal pronouns *we* and *our* that reiterate the common ground shared by the author and readers, which allows a sense of belongingness or inclusiveness to be felt by the readers. By doing so, the shifts contribute to building and promoting an interpersonal relationship with the readers.

Taken together, what these modulated/modalised and subjectivised deviations produce has a marked effect: the disproportionate author-reader relationship established through the imperative in the ST is reproduced with a more equal and balanced one. This is realised through adding modal operators and personal agency in the TT, since “even a high value modal is less determinate than a polar form” (Halliday 2000: 89).

## 5.2. Shifts in identifying participants

A clause may also serve to represent a phenomenon of the world, where reality is construed into processes in their circumstances (see a clause as representation in Halliday (2000: 106-109)). In typical cases, a process can be analysed into the process itself and the participants involved, both being crucial for understanding the reality represented. In political discourse, how various participants are named and identified is of great significance as they often carry political implications (cf. Fairclough 2001: 120, Pan 2015: 221). The naming strategy and the consequent identification in texts may implicitly convey the author’s attitude or ideology, e.g. in terms of his or her acknowledgement of the political status of self and of others. It is found that some identifying terms, which are ideologically charged in the ST, are stripped subtly of their political implications in the institutional translations. This type of shift is realised by the regular choices of the two items *officials* and *people’s* as found in the refined keywords list, illustrated in examples 4 and 5 below.

### Example 4

**ST:** 任何党政机关和领导干部都不得让司法机关做违反法定职责, 有碍司法公正的事情, 任何司法机关都不得执行党政机关和领导干部违法干预司法活动的要求.

**[Back translation:** Any Party or government authorities and leading cadres may not let judicial organs do things that breach legally stipulated responsibilities or impede judicial justice, any judicial organs may not execute Party or government authorities and leading cadres’ demand to illegally interfere with judicial activities.]

**IT:** No Party or government agency or official may prompt judicial bodies to do anything that is contrary to their legally prescribed duties or that obstructs their impartial administration of justice, and no judicial bodies may act on demands made

of them by Party or government agencies or officials that amount to attempts to illegally intervene in judicial activities.

**CT:** No Party or government body or leading cadre may let a judicial organ commit a breach of their statutory duty or impede judicial fairness; no judicial body may execute a demand to interfere in judicial activities from a Party or government body or leading cadre.

#### Example 5

**ST:** 各地区各部门一致认为, 党的十八届三中全会重点研究全面深化改革问题, 顺应了广大党员, 干部, 群众的愿望, 抓住了全社会最关心的问题, 普遍表示赞成.

[**Back translation:** Every locality and every department unanimously think, the Party's 18<sup>th</sup> Committee's 3<sup>rd</sup> Plenum by focusing on researching the issue of comprehensively deepening reform, meets broad Party members', cadres', the masses' desires, grasps the whole society's most concerned issues, universally express approval.]

**IT:** It was unanimously agreed by all regions and departments that by selecting this topic for discussion at the session, the Party answered the calls of the Party members, officials and common people in an effort to address the issues that are of most concern to the whole society. The public showed widespread support for the decision.

**CT:** All localities and departments unanimously believed that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Plenum of the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress would focus on researching the question of comprehensive deepening reform, would comply with the desires of the broad Party members, cadres and masses, and would grasp the issues that society is most concerned about, and they universally expressed praise.

In example 4, in translating the Chinese term 干部 'cadre', which is politically loaded to refer to those who assume leading or administrative positions within the Party's organisations, are twice transformed by institutional translators into *officials* in English, which is relatively free from ideological associations. In contrast, *cadre*, which refers to "a party worker or official" in some political parties, "especially the Communist Party," according to *COBUILD English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* (2001), is consistently adopted in Creemers' translations to reproduce the literal sense of ST. A similar case can also be observed in translating another politically-charged term 群众 'masses', as indicated in example 5. In this particular case, according to *Modern Chinese Dictionary* (2016: 1089), this word refers to those with another political status encompassing the ordinary people who are not members of the Party's organisations. By choosing *common people*, the institutional translation converts it into a politically neutral term that is distanced from ideological implication, as opposed to Creemers' literal translation into *masses*. Consequently, the politically sensed identification in the ST is replaced with a relatively value-free one

in the institutional translation through substitutions with synonymous terms. Such shifts in translating these two political terms are found in most instances where they occur in the STs, contributing to the occurrences of *officials* and *people's* in the keywords list. Thus, a de-ideologising phenomenon, though not quite obvious, is observed in the institutional translations.

### 5.3. Shifts in representing actions

Action, embodying how people or other actors do things or make them happen, is a core element of the material process where something is done (Halliday 2000: 109-112). In political discourse, the way in which actions are represented is indicative of certain political actor's intentions or values. It provides important clues for the audience's perception and interpretation of the political affairs discussed and the stance of the political actor involved. This becomes quite tangible when certain political actors intend to impose their ideology upon a specific readership by demanding actions, as is often the case for the Chinese STs in question. However, shifts in representing political actions to target readers are discerned frequently in the institutional translations. The regularity of these shifts is quite suggestive of translators' mediations. For example, in our parallel text analysis of *improve* as shown in the refined keywords list, the mediation is manifested in its reduction of the force of two Chinese action verbs.

#### Example 6

**ST:** 加快完善文化管理体制和文化生产经营机制, 建立健全现代公共文化服务体系.

**[Back translation:** Accelerate perfecting cultural management systems and cultural production and operation mechanisms, establish and complete modern public cultural service systems.]

**IT:** We should accelerate improvement of the system for managing the cultural sector and the mechanism for cultural production and operation, establish and improve a modern public cultural service system.

**CT:** Accelerate the perfection of cultural management systems and cultural production and management systems, establish and complete modern public culture service systems.

#### Example 7

**ST:** 同时, 我们也要看到, 实践发展永无止境, 立法工作也永无止境, 完善中国特色社会主义法律体系任务依然很重.

**[Back translation:** Simultaneously, we also need to see, the development of practice never has an ending, legislative work also never has an ending, perfecting Chinese characteristic socialist law system's task remains heavy.]

**IT:** At the same time, we must also be aware that there is no end to the development of praxis, while legislative work is also a never-ending process, and so it is still a formidable task to improve the socialist system of laws with Chinese characteristics.

**CT:** At the same time, we must also recognise that the development of practice is boundless, and that legislative work is boundless, perfecting the Socialist legal system with Chinese characteristics remains a heavy task.

Speaking of the specific measures on *deepening reform*, example 6 offers another case of mitigating the ST's authoritative tone by adding the modal verb *should* together with the plural subject *we*. What's more, the two underlined Chinese verbs 完善 'perfect' and 健全 'complete', besides suggesting two processes, both imply a finality as a result of the processes, indicated by their constitute characters 完 'end'/'finish' and 全 'entire'/'complete', respectively. In representing the Party's instructed actions towards recipients, they carry a strong force in showing the Party's determination in not only doing things but also pursuing a result, which allows little negotiation. While reproduced more faithfully by *perfection* and *complete* in Creemers' translation, the two Chinese verbs are replaced with *improvement* and *improve*, respectively, in the institutional translation, which merely indicate a process of effort without mentioning its result. In doing so, the institutional translation alleviates the ST's categorical and resolute force in representing the Party's instructions on carrying out actions. It is worth mentioning that, in addition to serving as an encouragement to raise readers' confidence, these two Chinese verbs also function to establish the Party's authority and emphasise its power that is beyond any doubt among recipients. However, they are regularly transformed into the more moderate forms *improve/improvement* in the institutional translations, as also illustrated in example 7, which present a milder tone towards readers. This result is consistent with Li and Xu's (2018) finding based on a larger set of data, which discovered a systematic trend of mitigating graduation epithets (i.e. those adjectives and adverbs that illustrate grading phenomena whereby attitudes are amplified and categories blurred, such as *initial*, *fully*) in self-related evaluation by institutional translators.

#### 5.4. Quantitative results

Quantitative analysis is conducted in this section in order to perceive the extent of the translator's mediation. The occurrences of each type of shifts, as indicated by the keywords *need*, *will*, *officials*, *people's* and *improve*, are calculated and summarised in Table 2. As is evident, with their respective occurrences of 205, 79 and 293, shifts of each type can be observed as a



frequent phenomenon in the institutional translations. In comparison, only a few instances of shifts are discovered in Creemers' translations, where close adherence to the original wording is typically found.

	Shift in interacting with readers	Shift in identifying participants	Shift in representing actions	Total
Linguistic markers	<i>need, will</i>	<i>officials, people's</i>	<i>improve</i>	
IT	205	79	293	577
CT	2	1	4	7

**Table 2 Occurrences of shifts**

## 6. Conclusive discussions

The above qualitative and quantitative results jointly point to an overall translation tendency to be more reader-friendly and to accommodate target cultural expectations – those not only of the elites (e.g. scholars or experts) in western countries but also of the common people who previously had little knowledge of China yet have recently become more interested in China (Huang 2015). Specifically, the disproportionate author-reader relationship established in the ST is regularly transformed into a more balanced and intimate one through modulating/modalising and interpersonalising the original's imperative tone, and the categorical force in representing instructed actions is typically replaced with a moderate one through mitigating action verbs. Further, two politically loaded terms with high frequencies are generally de-ideologised with relatively neutral or value-free ones through synonymous substitution. It can be assumed that the institutional translators' mediation, as established by the shifts discovered, is inseparable with the policies and practice of the institution that produces the translations, here the FLPA.

### 6.1. Analysis of the discursive practices of producing translations

With its prescribed mission of "presenting China to the world" (<http://www.cipg.org.cn>), i.e. "disseminating Chinese thoughts and exporting Chinese cultural elements" to other parts of the world (Huang 2015: 6), the FLPA mainly undertakes Chinese-to-foreign, i.e. publicity-oriented, translation activities. Specifically, as for the English translation of Chinese political texts, the aim is to "integrate Chinese-specific political concepts and ideas into the global discourse system" in order to promote

China's discourse power internationally (Huang *et al.* 2014: 6). Framed within this overall objective, the FLPA has put forward the 'Three Principles of Adherence' in its publicity-oriented translation practice, namely the principles of "being closer to the reality of China's development, being closer to the target audience's needs of information from China, and being closer to the target audience's thinking patterns" (Huang 2004: 27). These principles guide the FLPA's translation practice not only in its selection of texts for translation but also in the way translation is performed. This is guaranteed by virtue of the collective nature of its translation practice, especially the translation process which generally involves three successive procedures: an initial draft translation comes before language polishing by native speakers of English, which is then followed by the finalisation by senior translation experts at the last step (cf. Li and Li 2015).

As for the selection of the documents under examination, an interesting story unveils of the way the translations were initiated by the FLPA and Creemers, respectively. Shortly after the release of the Chinese documents, Creemers realised that they are "useful for the purposes of my own research, which includes China's constitutional arrangements" (email communication). Moreover, he felt it necessary for them "to be translated rapidly, as global observers base their actions on their expectation of Chinese policy" and that "the Chinese government does not do this quickly enough". He then took two full days to finish the translations and published them on his own personal webpage. As for the FLPA, by its convention, documents released by the CPC National Congress (held every five years) are typically provided with their translated English versions. However, documents released by the yearly Plenary Session of the CPC Central Committee (e.g. the materials under study) are usually offered with no translated texts, primarily due to the shortage of translators in the FLPA, according to Huang *et al.* (2014). Nevertheless, the FLPA's translation work was motivated later by two conflicting facts. On the one hand, it was before long that the FLPA realised there was a great international demand for other language versions of the documents, partly because of the rapidly growing international prestige of China in recent years and partly because these documents are immediate indications of China's moves in the coming future under a new leadership, as explained by Huang *et al.* (2014: 5). On the other hand, the FLPA perceived that an unofficial English version by Rogier Creemers which was already published online soon after the release of the original Chinese documents and which "became the only source for reference" internationally (Huang *et al.* 2014: 5), contained some errors. These concerns were expressed by Youyi Huang, former vice director of the FLPA, in an interview undertaken by the authors of this paper in October 2016.

Worrying about the accuracy and quality of Creemers' translations, and "to better transmit China's voice" (Huang *et al.* 2014: 5) in a way targeting a wider coverage and audience, the FLPA decided to publish the translations themselves and make them widely available in multiple foreign languages (e.g. French, German, Spanish, and Arabic). As illustrated by Huang *et al.*, "To take the lead in defining Chinese discourse for international publicity has become a new historical task for the FLPA" (2014: 6). It is thus not difficult to see that the FLPA's selection of these texts for translation was made closely in line with the 'Three Principles of Adherence' mentioned previously.

Regarding the criteria on performing translations, Huang commented in the interview that, while "faithfulness to the original" is and has been the top criterion, a significant shift in institutional practice has been carried out in recent years. Specifically, for the purpose of international publicity, translations of political texts are required to be 'down to earth', or simply to be more acceptable to the target readership while remaining faithful to the original. In other words, translators are required to strive for a balance between faithfulness and acceptability away from the traditional source-priority practice (Huang 2015). This criterion, in keeping with the principle of "being closer to the target audience's thinking patterns," may explain why institutional translators would mediate translations in a way that is more target-oriented and reader-friendly yet still highly loyal to the original author – the CPC. Creemers, however, claimed that his "main principle is to remain as faithful as possible to the meaning of the text within the original language context of political speech in China" (email communication). As he said in his email, he "ha[s] no political agenda with regard to China's global affairs" and "tr[ies] to be neutral in respect of my stance towards China and the Chinese leadership". Moreover, he asserted, "I try not to let ideology influence my view of a text. Rather, I aim to reflect the text as it was written by its author". As a result, he tried to translate "as literally as possible," which may explain less shifts identified in his translations.

## **6.2. A brief socio-cultural account**

Starting from its Reform and Opening up initiated in 1978, China has successfully developed itself and grown into the second largest economy in the world. Yet China has frequently encountered distrust, prejudice or even hostility from western countries, partly because of their different political systems and partly because of cultural discrepancies (see Pan 2015, Wu and Zhang 2015, Sparks 2010). This, as China perceives, gets in the way of its further development (Huang 2015). Thereby, the CPC and the CPC-

led Chinese government feel the need to export and strengthen its own discourse internationally in order to “create a favourable international public opinion environment for China’s development” (Huang 2015: 6). Translation serves as a useful medium to achieve this goal. However, for this goal to succeed, it has to overcome two major obstacles in its publicity-oriented translations: ideological and cultural gaps between Chinese and western readers. The discourse as manifested in the Chinese political texts, shaped by a dominating Chinese socialist ideology, may clash with ideological expectations of target readers in western countries where capitalist ideology dominates. For better acceptance of its political discourse, it feels obliged to dilute the divergent ideological implications of some contents that may bring unfavourable impressions to target readers (Huang 2015), which may give reason to the de-ideologising shifts found in our analysis. In addition, different cultural expectations are another factor to be considered. In terms of rhetorical conventions, English and Chinese diverge in their styles of persuasion or ways of argumentation as revealed in numerous contrastive linguistic studies (e.g. Nisbett *et al.* 2001, Hu and Cao 2011). While “Chinese rhetorical norms tend to encourage the framing of ideas in non-polemical terms” (Hu and Cao 2011: 2805), particularly so in political genres, Anglophone culture tends to be more cautious in making claims and emphasises giving due attention to audience. Chen (2014: 10), an in-house translation expert, recently commented that a number of Chinese verbs like 完善 ‘perfect’ are sort of categorical and overstated when translated into their direct equivalents in English, which was the practice in traditional translations of Chinese political texts. He regarded this as a problem caused by cross-cultural differences and recommended to solve it for better international acceptance. It is thus understandable that the institutional translators, guided by the ‘Three Principles of Adherence’, chose to attenuate the ST’s categorical and authoritative tone by substitution of synonymous verbs.

In summary, our findings, contradictory to the assertion that translating is “initiated in and by the target culture” (Toury 1985: 5), support Meylaerts’ (2013: 519) argument that source culture “may co-determine the translation initiative, the selection of material to translate, the translation strategies”, and goes a step further in revealing that translation may also be totally initiated and carried out by the source culture. In this regard, translation is not a ‘bridge’, as suggested in the traditional metaphor, across two cultures or societies to facilitate communication, where an adaphorous role is assumed for translation, but rather, as an activity underpinned by ideology, serves largely its producer’s interests. Back to the dispute between Wang and other scholars, noted in the introduction, it also shows

that there is still a struggle for the proper degree of balance between traditionally prioritising faithfulness and the new demands for better acceptance as regards translation of Chinese political texts. That is, the translators now often feel in a dilemma: although the translating institution (the FLPA) is entrusted with the mission of “presenting China to the world”, the translators still have only very limited power and remain in a subordinate status in the translation of political texts, where faithfulness always comes first. More precisely, the translators are not supposed or entitled to make changes, at least obvious ones, to the Chinese originals which enjoy authoritative status in China’s political sphere, even though they have to fulfil their task of international publicity. Therefore, the shifts observed in our study are only minimal and made in the translation technique sense, which fall within the capacity of the translators. However, at the institutional level, there has recently been a call for a more acceptable, target-oriented and well-suited way of translating Chinese political discourse in order to better integrate Chinese-specific political concepts and ideas into the global discourse system, such as drafting political texts in Chinese and in other languages simultaneously (Huang 2017). However, given the status of translators and translations that still remain secondary in the context of the translation of Chinese political discourse, how far this will go still awaits to be unveiled through further comparative analyses in the future. Lastly, as our corpus comprises only six Chinese political texts with a limited overall size, more empirical studies with larger corpus data should be carried out to corroborate our findings and to arrive at better generalisability.

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## Biographies

**Feng Pan** is an Associate Professor at the Department of Translation and Interpreting, Huazhong University of Science and Technology. He holds a PhD in Translation and Intercultural Studies from Shanghai Jiao Tong University. His academic interests include Corpus-based Translation Studies and conference interpreting. His publications have appeared in *Across Languages and Cultures* (2017), *Babel* (2016), *Foreign Language Teaching and Research* (2015, in Chinese) among others.



Email: [fengpan@hust.edu.cn](mailto:fengpan@hust.edu.cn)

**Kyung Hye Kim** is a Lecturer in Translation Studies at the School of Foreign Languages, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, and a member of the Baker Centre for Translation and Intercultural Studies. Her academic interests lie in Corpus-based Translation Studies, Critical Discourse Analysis, and the

application of narrative theory to translation and interpreting. Her publications have appeared in *Target* (2017), *Perspectives* (2019), and *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (2019).



Email: [kyunghye.kim@sjtu.edu.cn](mailto:kyunghye.kim@sjtu.edu.cn)

**Tao Li** is an Associate Professor in Translation Studies at the Centre for Corpus Research, Shanghai Ocean University. He holds a PhD in Translation Studies from Shanghai Jiao Tong University. His research interests cover Corpus-based Translation Studies and Discourse Analysis. He has published over 20 papers in *Discourse and Society* (2020), *Discourse, Context and Media* (2018), *Modern Foreign Languages* (2015, in Chinese) among others.



Corresponding author  
E-mail: [tli@shou.edu.cn](mailto:tli@shou.edu.cn)

## Appendix

### Excerpts of the Interview with Youyi Huang (former vice director of the FLPA) conducted by Tao Li in October 2016

Q for questions raised by Tao Li, and A for answers by Youyi Huang (translated by the authors).

**Q:** What are the types of political documents in China?

**A:** As far as my work is concerned, there are four major types: firstly, the resolution and reports by the CPC Central Committee; secondly, the work reports by government departments (e.g., the Premiers or Ministers); thirdly, the remarks or statements by government leaders; lastly, there are also some articles to be translated at times, for example the articles published in *Qiushi Journal*, hosted by the CPC Central Committee, that elaborate on the socialist path with Chinese characteristics or government policies.

**Q:** Are there any criteria or rules in translating political documents? If any, what are they?

**A:** There are no written-out ones. But in translating political documents, one cannot translate arbitrarily. Maybe one can exert more degrees of freedom in translating a biography or the introduction to an enterprise, etc. But the top criterion for translating political texts is faithfulness to the original, and it is not allowed to add anything personal. All one can do is to provide some background information out of the need for cultural transfer. Yet, this is done only when necessary but not always the case.

**Q:** Are there any changes in translations when compared with the past?

**A:** The biggest change when compared with the past is that translations are required to be “down to earth” (*jiediqi*). In the past, the readers of our political documents are limited in number, principally scholars or experts in Chinese Studies, who are quite familiar with the Chinese discourse system. Therefore, they can understand the translations easily despite that faithfulness is closely followed in translating. Nowadays, as the readership is greatly expanded, the average familiarity with Chinese discourse is much diluted. Consequently, in translating political documents, it is required that the translations shall be understood by average foreign audiences. For example, it is sometimes essential to provide some extra background information in translation. However, the principle of faithfulness to the original remains the same. The most significant change is to focus on *jiediqi*, i.e., to accommodate the needs and comprehension capability of foreign audiences.

**Q:** Who are involved in the translation of those documents released by the Third/Fourth Plenary Session of the 18<sup>th</sup> CPC Central Committee?

**A:** As we realised there is a great demand for translations of these documents, we soon assigned the task of translation to the Foreign Languages Press. The press has a translation team of its own, but it would sometimes assign the task of translation to other departments within the FLPA when the schedule is busy. They are so-called “external assistance”

from within the institution, for example the translators working for the journals *Beijing Review* and *China Today*, or for the website *China.com*. Despite this, if the work is still more than manageable, it would also invite senior translation experts from *Xinhua.com* and the China Central Compilation & Translation Bureau, or university professors for help. But on the whole, it is the Foreign Languages Press that had undertaken the major work for this translation task.

**Q:** What process and procedures are involved in translation?

**A:** Though varied across departments, the practices of translation are largely identical with only minor differences. Since not everyone is specialised in translating political texts, you have to know who from the team has the expertise in translating this special genre. Accordingly, the first step involves selecting the most suitable translators to translate those Chinese texts into English. As for the second step, it is necessary to invite a foreigner, I mean a professional native speaker, to refine the translations. Instead of any international students, who may not be qualified, we typically invite journalists from a foreign news agency, or an editor from an international press, or a professor from the News or English departments of a university, who are competent in paperwork. The native speakers are able to refine the translations in order to conform to the target conventions, and allow them to be easier understood by foreign readers. But they may sometimes produce errors. Therefore, we have another procedure called “checking-over”. For important political texts, we have at least two revisers in this procedure, one for an initial checking, and the other for review. The first reviser is responsible for checking proper nouns and numbers and so on, and the second reviser is to finalise the translations and ensure that everything is correct.

**Q:** What qualities are required of translators in political translation?

**A:** Firstly, translators have to be familiar with political concepts. Secondly, translators need to pay attention to the style of texts. For example, when translating a government leader’s statements or remarks, the translations should fit in well with his roles and identity.