

On the construction of a "trinity" English translation model for CPC literature based on the philosophy of language

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Abstract. The philosophy of language centers on the meaning of words and provides important theoretical guidance for the English translation of CPC literature. From the perspective of the philosophy of language, this study takes the English translation of the white paper *China's Rural Roads Development in the New Era* as a case to construct a "trinity" English translation model for CPC literature. Specifically, at the semantic dimension, this model integrates explanatory thinking, systematic thinking, adaptive thinking, and innovative thinking in a coordinated manner. At the logical dimension, dialectical thinking is employed to identify the authenticity of coordinate relationships between phrases and to examine the degree of adjacency between sentences. At the aesthetic dimension, imitative thinking is adopted to reproduce, to the greatest extent possible, the parallel rhetorical structures of the source text. This model enables translators to work with clear objectives and to approach translation in a comprehensive and systematic manner.

Keywords: philosophy of language, CPC literature, "trinity" English translation model

1. Introduction

Twentieth-century philosophy underwent a "linguistic turn". Building upon the foundations of modern logic established by George Boole and Gottlob Frege, philosophers such as G. E. Moore, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Donald Davidson gradually developed the theoretical framework of philosophy of language. Its core concern lies in the relationship between language and the world, as well as the problem of linguistic or lexical meaning. At present, research on the translation of CPC literature primarily focuses on perspectives such as China's international discourse system [1], communication [2], pedagogy [3], translation policy [4], translation norms [5], discourse analysis [6], and translation strategies and methods [7]. However, studies integrating philosophy of language with the translation of CPC literature remain relatively scarce. Philosophy of language is a discipline that requires a macro-level perspective, micro-level analytical depth, and precision. Translation, as an interlingual transformation within the context of cross-cultural communication, likewise emphasizes a holistic outlook and accuracy. In particular, the translation of CPC literature, as an essential component of "telling China's story well", demands careful deliberation and balanced judgment on the part of the translator. Under the guidance of philosophy of language, re-examining the translation practice of CPC literature and analyzing its underlying principles still offers considerable research potential. Therefore, guided by philosophy

of language, this study attempts to construct a "trinity" English translation model for the Communist Party of China (CPC) literature from three dimensions: semantic, logical, and aesthetic.

2. The guiding significance of philosophy of language for the English translation of CPC literature

From an ontological perspective, philosophy of language helps translators of CPC literature clarify the intrinsic connotations of the text. CPC literature serves as important textual carriers through which China's state authorities announce national policies and articulate governing philosophies to the international community. These documents are rich in meaning and implication. Philosophy of language, with its focus on the meaning of words, analyzes meaning through its multidimensional characteristics and thereby assists translators in exploring the essential nature of textual meaning.

From an epistemological perspective, philosophy of language enables translators of CPC literature to develop a dynamic view of meaning. The translation of CPC literature requires translators to possess solid bilingual competence, keen political awareness, and specialized knowledge of international communication. The transmission of meaning operates dynamically under the influence of multiple factors. The dynamic conception of meaning in philosophy of language helps translators reconceptualize how meaning is conveyed.

From a methodological perspective, philosophy of language assists translators of CPC literature in adopting scientific translation strategies. Traditional translation theorists have often been preoccupied with seemingly binary oppositions, such as "literal translation" versus "free translation", "translatability" versus "untranslatability", and "faithfulness to the author" versus "faithfulness to the reader". In contrast, philosophical thinking emphasizes the unity of opposites within contradiction. "Language itself is both a material entity and a product of mental activity" [8], and the translation process constitutes "a process of intersection, interpenetration, and mutual transformation between two linguistic modes of thought" [9]. Fundamental differences exist between Chinese and Western modes of thinking, which exert multidimensional and profound influences on lexical richness, expressive perspective, semantic focus, and syntactic structure in both Chinese and English.

3. Constructing a "trinity" English translation model for CPC literature from the perspective of philosophy of language

This section takes the white paper *China's Rural Roads Development in the New Era*, released in 2024 by the State Council Information Office as a case study. From the semantic, logical, and aesthetic dimensions, it develops a "trinity" model for the English translation of CPC literature.

3.1. The semantic dimension

The authority of a white paper demands an exceptionally high degree of fidelity to ensure the accuracy and consistency of terminology, concepts, and propositions. However, semantic meaning is often characterized by condensation, fluidity, and cross-linguistic asymmetry, all of which may create obstacles in translation. A multifaceted approach is therefore required, mobilizing diverse modes of thinking in a coordinated manner.

3.1.1. Explanatory thinking

The political nature of a white paper determines that it contains a large number of political terms. In pursuit of efficient information transmission and convenient communication, policy-related, principle-based, or project-

oriented terms frequently exhibit a high degree of abbreviation, typically in the concise form of "numeral + key term". Owing to differences in collocational patterns between Chinese and English, or ambiguity in numerical reference, the translation often cannot fully preserve the formal features of the source text. Explanatory thinking is thus required to trace the origin of the term and eliminate ambiguity.

(1) Source text: "八七" 扶贫攻坚 Translation: the *Seven-year Priority Poverty Reduction Program (1994–2000)*

The "'八七' 扶贫攻坚" refers to the *Seven-year Priority Poverty Reduction Program (1994–2000)* promulgated and implemented in 1994. It aimed to basically solve the problem of food and clothing for 80 million impoverished people in rural areas within the final seven years of the twentieth century. To avoid misunderstanding "八七" as a date or as "87 measures", the abbreviated form must be abandoned in translation. Instead, the expression is restored as "seven-year", with the specific time span indicated in parentheses. As the figure of 80 million is not an exact number and would render the program name excessively lengthy, only the core meaning is explicated.

(2) Source text: 农村公路 "千灯万带" 示范工程 Translation: a pilot project for greater coverage of traffic lights and speed bumps

The pattern "千A万B" is a common idiomatic construction in Chinese, as seen in expressions such as "thousands of mountains and rivers" or "thousands of words". In such cases, "thousand" and "ten thousand" are not literal numbers but rhetorical devices indicating abundance. Similarly, "千灯万带" merely emphasizes extensive coverage. The project refers to installing additional traffic lights and speed bumps at level crossings on rural roads. The translator employs the comparative form "greater" to make explicit the notion of expansion implied by "adding". To prevent "灯" and "带" from being misconstrued as "street lamps" or "green belts", they are rendered in full as "traffic lights" and "speed bumps".

3.1.2. Systematic thinking

Beyond political terminology, the translation of ordinary words in a white paper also warrants careful attention. Semantic meaning often exhibits a "fluid" quality, in that "meaning is conferred through use" [10]. Words enter context through collocation [11], and their vitality lies not in static dictionary definitions but in their functioning within living discourse. Systematic thinking is therefore required—that is, adopting a holistic perspective rather than confining interpretation to isolated lexical items, and carefully considering contextual meaning.

(3) Source text: 农村物流 "活" 起来 Translation: Expediting Logistics for Rural Areas

This example appears as a section heading in the white paper. If viewed in isolation, "活" might be interpreted as "activate". However, according to the *Modern Chinese Dictionary* (7th ed.), "activate" means "to stimulate something so that it becomes active" [12]. The section in question primarily introduces measures such as extending express delivery services to villages and establishing 289,000 village-level integrated postal and logistics service stations. The context concerns the prior absence of express delivery services and inefficient logistics in rural areas, rather than reactivating an already existing but stagnant system. Rendering the term as "expedite" more accurately reflects the broader context of building rural delivery infrastructure and increasing logistical efficiency.

(4) Source text: 奋力实现农村公路由 "通" 到 "畅" 再到 "好" 的转变 Translation: sparing no effort to upgrade rural roads for a high-quality road network

The term "转变" carries a relatively neutral connotation. While "change", "convert", or "turn" could convey the transformation in road conditions, such renderings would fail to capture the progressive and positive trajectory implied in the original. By recasting "转变" as "upgrade", the translator highlights the continuous improvement in road construction quality. Moreover, "upgrade" resonates with the preceding

phrase "sparing no effort", together underscoring the enterprising spirit of striving for development. This exemplifies systematic thinking grounded in the overall discourse context.

3.1.3. Adaptive thinking

Due to constraints of textual purpose and length, white papers generally provide only limited footnotes or endnotes, except for a small number of essential technical terms. The original *Rural Roads* white paper includes brief endnotes for only five items, such as "direct-pass ethnic groups" and road bridge classification standards. For other differences arising from institutional, cognitive, or cultural factors, it is likewise impractical for the translation to supply extensive annotation. In such cases, translators must employ adaptive thinking—that is, adapting to the reception habits of target-language readers through simplification or transformation.

(5) Source text: 2023年农村公路一次死亡3人以上较大交通事故起数比2013年下降36.5%，一次死亡10人以上重特大交通事故起数比2013年下降85.7%。 Translation: In 2023, the number of rural road traffic accidents with a death toll of more than three dropped by 36.5 percent from the 2013 figure, and the number of accidents with a death toll of more than 10 fell by 85.7 percent.

In China, road traffic accidents are classified into four categories by severity, in descending order: extraordinarily serious, serious, relatively serious, and ordinary. However, classification standards differ across countries. For example, the United Kingdom categorizes accidents as fatal, serious, or slight, while the United States primarily distinguishes Fatal Crashes, Injury Crashes, and Property Damage Only incidents, with further variations among individual states. Given that the original text already specifies thresholds such as "3人以上", "10人以上", omitting the categories "较大", "重特大" in translation does not compromise meaning and helps avoid confusion for readers from different institutional backgrounds.

(6) Source text: "修好农村路, 服务城镇化, 让农民兄弟走上油路和水泥路" Translation: "constructing more and better rural roads to facilitate urbanization, and ensure that farmers have access to asphalt and cement roads"

Chinese and English emerged from distinct natural and cultural environments. The address term "农民兄弟" (literally, "farmer brothers") conveys the Party and government's respect and concern for the farming population. Rich in emotional warmth and human sentiment, it effectively communicates a sense of people-centered governance and fosters empathy. However, this form of address is rooted in Chinese culture, which emphasizes relational closeness and interpersonal bonds, whereas Western cultures tend to stress individual identity and autonomy. Moreover, "农民兄弟" is gender-inclusive in Chinese, not limited to males; translating it literally as "brothers" could imply gender bias. In addition, "Brothers" in English is often associated with organizational names, potentially causing misunderstanding. Considering these cultural and linguistic differences, the translator omits the term "兄弟".

(7) Source text: 加强农村公路资金使用监管,给资金戴上"紧箍咒" Translation: strengthened oversight over the use and management of rural road funds

Source text: 辐射带动沿线1,000多户农牧民吃上了"旅游饭" Translation: enabling more than 1,000 households of farmers and herders along the routes to benefit from tourism

The expression "紧箍咒" originates from the Chinese literary classic *Journey to the West*, where it symbolizes strict and effective compulsory restraint, evoking associations with rigorous supervision among Chinese readers. The phrase "吃上……饭" (literally, "to eat ... rice") is rooted in China's agrarian tradition, where food symbolizes livelihood and sustenance, gradually extending to meanings such as subsistence and income. These metaphorical images, however, are less familiar to English-speaking audiences. The translator employs two strategies. First, deletion: the phrase "加强农村公路资金使用监管" already fully conveys the

meaning implied by "紧箍咒". Second, transformation: "旅游饭" is rendered as "benefit from tourism", converting the metaphor into an explicit expression of economic gain.

3.1.4. Innovative thinking

When translating expressions with Chinese characteristics, it is essential not only to preserve the original political intent and nuance, but also to reflect the innovation and confidence inherent in China's institutional and theoretical frameworks [13]. Innovative thinking can lend concision and ingenuity to translation while also facilitating the sharing of China's experience and solutions with the international community.

(8) Source text: "总路长+三级路长" 体系 Translation: the "1+3" road chief system

The "路长制" is an innovative rural road management model first introduced in Fujian Province and represents a distinctive Chinese institutional practice. As such, it constitutes a key concept conveyed in the white paper. Rendering "总路长+三级路长" as "principal road chief + road chiefs at three levels" would be accurate and unambiguous. However, institutional terminology requires concision and rhetorical force rather than verbosity. The translator creatively converts the textual description into the numerical expression "1+3", in which the leadership role of the "总" is represented by "1", and the three administrative tiers "三级" are represented by "3". This preserves the hierarchical structure while achieving both formal simplicity and semantic clarity, effectively highlighting the institutional wisdom embodied in China's rural road management system.

3.2. The logical dimension

Western modes of thinking tend to emphasize linear analysis and are often described as "field-independent", whereas traditional Han Chinese thinking values intuitive insight, affective resonance, and holistic perception [9]. Chinese texts primarily achieve implicit coherence through functional meaning, with structural arrangement playing a secondary role; English texts, by contrast, typically construct explicit logical relations [14]. One defining feature of dialectical thinking is the acknowledgment and analysis of contradiction. Translators must therefore treat the differences between Chinese and English logic as a "contradiction" to be addressed, engaging in dialectical reflection to determine a line of reasoning that accords with English rhetorical conventions.

3.2.1. Identifying the authenticity of coordinate relationships between phrases

In the *Rural Roads* white paper, core concepts, policy principles, and action guidelines are often condensed into a sequence of parallel structures. However, formal parallelism does not necessarily entail a genuine coordinate relationship. In translation, careful scrutiny is required. If the coordinate relationship holds semantically and logically, the original sequence may be retained; if not, appropriate adjustment must be made.

(9) Source text: 坚持调动各方积极性, 建立 "政府主导, 部门协调, 上下联动, 运转高效" 的工作格局, 形成权责清晰, 齐抓共管的农村公路管理养护体制机制. Translation: In order to mobilize the enthusiasm of all parties involved, China has put in place a highly efficient mechanism for rural road management and maintenance. Led by the government, this mechanism features coordination and interaction among different departments across levels, delineating powers and responsibilities to ensure concerted efforts.

In the original text, the four expressions— "政府主导, 部门协调, 上下联动, 运转高效" —appear in parallel form. However, they do not all constitute coordinate elements in terms of attribute, category, or function. The first three follow the pattern "institution + action", describing how the system operates, whereas "运转高效" denotes the outcome of such arrangements. The translator therefore separates the elements, rendering "运转高效" as a concise pre-modifier attached to 农村公路管理养护体制机制". After translating

the main structural component, a new sentence elaborates on "政府主导,部门协调,上下联动". This restructuring clarifies logical relations and prevents excessive information density within a single sentence.

3.2.2. Examining the degree of adjacency between sentences

The translator must carefully analyze the internal hierarchy of information within a paragraph and assess the proximity of adjacent sentences. By reordering information in accordance with English discourse conventions, logical progression becomes more cohesive and natural.

(10) Source text: 阿布洛哈村,位于四川省凉山彝族自治州布拖县.阿布洛哈,彝语意为"人迹罕至的地方".该村三面环绕着海拔3,000米以上的高山,一面朝江临崖. Translation: Abuluoha, a small village located in Butuo County, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province, is surrounded by mountains over 3,000 meters high on three sides and a cliff above the river on the other. As its name in the Yi language suggests, this village was "a place off the beaten path".

In the original, the first sentence introduces the geographical location of Abuluoha Village, the second explains the meaning of its name in the Yi language, and the third describes its surrounding environment. Evidently, the first and third sentences both concern physical geography and thus share closer adjacency. Moreover, presenting the description of mountains on three sides and a river cliff on the other first highlights the village's limited accessibility, thereby logically preparing for the explanation that its name signifies "人迹罕至". This sequence accords more closely with the inferential flow of information typical in English discourse. By merging the first and third sentences and translating the second afterward, the translator avoids a break in logical continuity and enhances textual cohesion.

3.3. The aesthetic dimension

CPC literature has increasingly adopted a more accessible and relatable style of language in order to project an image of China that is credible, amiable, and respectable. Portions of the white paper likewise display a degree of colloquialization. The aesthetic quality of the white paper is particularly evident in its use of balanced, antithetical expressions, which generate a rhythmic cadence and structural symmetry. Given the fundamental differences between Chinese and English in grammatical structure and phonological system, it is unrealistic to expect a complete reproduction of the original rhetorical devices in translation. The translator therefore mobilizes imitative thinking—modeling the formal features of the source text while substituting certain elements—to approximate a comparable aesthetic effect.

(11) Source text: "要想富,先修路". Translation: "If you want to become better-off, build a road".

The slogan "要想富,先修路" became widely known in China in the early 1980s. It encapsulates a development strategy that promotes economic growth through infrastructure construction, and is concise, forceful, and easy to disseminate. In the original, "富" (rich) and "路" (road) form a rhyme. In the translation, *become*, *better-off*, and *build* create alliteration, while *build* and *road* produce an end rhyme, preserving the rhythmic appeal of the slogan. Structurally, the original is a compound sentence in which the first clause states the goal and the second the means. The omission of the subject renders it a universal call, reflecting a collectivist orientation and the mobilizing character of public policy discourse. Since English favors structural completeness, the translator supplies the second-person subject "you", narrowing the distance between text and reader and reproducing the original's sense of immediacy and approachability.

(12) Source text: 农村公路"三分建,七分养". Translation: A well-functioning rural road network relies 30 percent on construction and 70 percent on maintenance.

The "三分 七分" structure is a common colloquial contrastive pattern in Chinese, as in expressions such as "三分天注定,七分靠打拼". By juxtaposing two opposing or markedly distinct elements, it creates rhythmic variation and lends dynamism to otherwise static language. The proportions are

approximate rather than mathematically exact. English has comparable rhetorical patterns—for instance, Thomas Edison's remark, "Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration". Rather than generalizing the meaning as "maintenance is more important than construction", the translator preserves the vivid numerical contrast. This approach resonates intertextually with familiar English aphorisms while conveying, in authentic form, the distinctive wisdom underlying China's infrastructure governance.

(13) Source text: "晴天一身土, 雨天一身泥"成为历史, "出门水泥路, 抬脚上客车" 的梦想变为现实. Translation: Trudging through dust and mud on dirt roads has become a thing of the past; cement roads leading to every household have made bus services available for all—a dream come true.

Within each clause, the original employs internal parallelism; between clauses, it establishes a further layer of antithesis, generating a strong rhythmic effect. Vivid expressions such as "一身土", "一身泥", "出门", "抬脚" create a palpable visual scene. By contrasting conditions before and after road construction, the text achieves a striking sense of transformation. Reproducing these three layers of aesthetic effect poses a considerable challenge. As the core information does not hinge on "weather" or specific bodily movements, the translator streamlines details such as "晴天", "雨天", "出门", "抬脚". Instead, the verb *trudge* recreates the image of arduous travel prior to road construction, while *every* and *all* emphasize the extensive coverage achieved afterward. "Dust" and "mud" are paired to form a compact rhyme through the shared vowel sound |ʌ|, and the addition of "dirt roads" establishes a clear contrast with "cement roads", foregrounding the qualitative upgrade in infrastructure. The semicolon further intensifies the contrast between past and present in accordance with English logical conventions.

4. Conclusion

Taking the English version of the white paper *China's Rural Roads Development in the New Era* as a case study, this research constructs a "trinity" English translation model for CPC literature from the semantic, logical, and aesthetic dimensions. Specifically, it encompasses explanatory, systematic, adaptive, and innovative thinking at the semantic level; dialectical thinking at the logical level; and imitative thinking at the aesthetic level. These three dimensions do not operate independently but are interwoven throughout the translation process. The various modes of thinking interact cyclically and permeate the entire process of "comprehension–transformation–expression". The proposed model assists translators of CPC literature in mobilizing multiple cognitive strategies in concert, balancing meticulous attention to detail with holistic coordination, and ultimately achieving equilibrium between semantic accuracy and reader reception.

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