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A study on C-E translation strategies of political metaphors with Chinese characteristics from the perspective of cognitive linguistics

Yuening Zhang

City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China

yuenzhang8-c@my.cityu.edu.hk

Abstract. Chinese official publicity discourse abounds in culturally exclusive political metaphors carrying unique Chinese governance concepts, which create cognitive mismatches between Chinese and English conceptual mappings in international communication. Drawing on cognitive linguistic theories including Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Image Schema and Frame Semantics, alongside Newmark's semantic and communicative translation, this study collects 90 officially released Chinese political terms with parallel English translations as corpus. Adopting the MIP metaphor identification procedure and qualitative case analysis, this study sorts out five categories of political metaphors and summarizes four mainstream translation strategies applied by official translators. Further analysis demonstrates that the overlap of cross-linguistic conceptual mappings, vacancy of cultural frames and communicative priority of overseas publicity jointly govern translators' strategic choices. This study thus supplements empirical studies on political discourse translation from cognitive perspectives and offers operable cognitive criteria for translators engaging in CPC and government external publicity texts.

Keywords: cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor, political metaphor, Chinese-English publicity translation, cultural mapping

1. Introduction

Metaphor has transcended its traditional rhetorical definition and become a channel for humans to construct abstract cognition based on embodied experience. This cognitive turn in metaphor research, however, lacked a unified theoretical framework until a groundbreaking monograph was published in 1980. The Conceptual Metaphor Theory proposed by Lakoff an Johnson [1] has thoroughly revolutionized academic understanding of the essence of metaphor, verifying that the comprehension of all abstract concepts relies on systematic cross-domain mapping from concrete source domains. The living experiences and social cultures of different ethnic groups can shape differentiated metaphorical mapping logics. Such cross-cultural divergences in metaphorical cognition become particularly salient when it comes to political concepts, which are heavily dependent on metaphor to make intangible governance ideas perceptible. Against this backdrop, the English translation of Chinese political concepts for international publicity faces a set of unique cognitive challenges

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rooted in cultural disparities. One of the most intractable problems is that the metaphorical vehicles embedded in Chinese political discourse may fail to trigger equivalent conceptual associations among English-speaking audiences [2].

China's official political discourse heavily relies on metaphors to popularize policy interpretations. Standardized external publicity expressions such as "the Belt and Road Initiative" (*一带一路倡议*), "Tough Reform Hurdles" (*啃硬骨头*), "the Blue Sky Defense War" (*蓝天保卫战*) and "a community with a shared future for mankind all employ concrete entities to carry macro state governance philosophies" (*人类命运共同体*), forming an exclusive system of political metaphors. Such metaphors sometimes are bound to unique Chinese cognitive frameworks. When translated literally into English, overseas audiences lack corresponding historical and social experiences, making it impossible for them to fully activate the policy connotations embedded in metaphors, which directly undermines the effectiveness of China's international discourse communication.

2. Literature review

2.1. Research on metaphor within the cognitive linguistics framework

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) put forward by Lakoff and Johnson argues that metaphor operates via systematic cross-domain mappings, where embodied experiences from concrete source domains are projected onto abstract target domains to facilitate human understanding of intangible concepts [3]. Drawing insights from CMT, a growing body of translation scholarship has turned to conceptual mapping to unpack metaphor-related translation difficulties. Within Cognitive Translatology, Wen and Xiao conceptualize translation as a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural activity of cognitive reconstruction. From their cognitive-oriented viewpoint, a central challenge discussed in this literature stems from mismatches between source-language and target-language conceptual mappings when rendering metaphorical texts.

Despite its explanatory power for cross-domain mapping, CMT offers limited insights into pre-conceptual embodied structures that underpin metaphorical thinking, a dimension highly relevant to politically-charged metaphors rooted in human physical experience. To supplement this gap, Image Schema Theory is adopted as a complementary analytical tool. It foregrounds embodied, preconceptual cognitive units derived from human physical interaction with the surroundings. Basic schemas such as path, container, construction and confrontation can underlie a range of metaphorical expressions, including political metaphors which extend these embodied structures to talk about governance and social changes. For studies of political metaphor translation, this lens makes it possible to trace how deep-seated bodily-based cognitive structures shape metaphorical vehicles, and why cross-cultural divergences may emerge even when surface-level metaphor forms look comparable.

Mapping patterns and embodied schemas explain how political metaphors are cognitively constructed, yet they cannot fully account for interpretive barriers arising from culturally-specific background knowledge in international communication. Frame Semantics further fills this analytical void by centering on culture-bound cognitive frames. It highlights that linguistic meaning is embedded within broader cultural cognitive frames. When target-language readers lack access to relevant cultural frames, metaphorical meanings may face risks of incomplete comprehension or partial information loss, though such outcomes are not inevitable, as translators may mitigate gaps through explicit explanatory or adaptive translational operations. Building on Frame Semantics, Wang [4] observes that cross-cultural translation frictions often arise from incompatibilities between source-language cultural frames and the cultural and interpretive frames available to target-language

readers. Under this view, the various metaphor-handling choices adopted by translators can be regarded as modifications, substitutions or omissions of the original source-text cultural frames.

Taken together, CMT, Image Schema Theory and Frame Semantics offer interlocking analytical tools for observing metaphor production and cross-cultural transfer. Nevertheless, many existing studies tend to deploy these theoretical lenses separately rather than adopting their combined explanatory power to examine political metaphor translation, leaving the cognitive reasoning behind translators' strategy choices insufficiently elaborated.

At present, no unified norms have been formulated for handling political metaphors in domestic CPC and government external publicity translation practices, with literal translation, vehicle replacement, paraphrasing and metaphor deletion applied concurrently. Most existing studies have only enumerated translation phenomena, failing to interpret the underlying motivations behind translators' strategic choices through a complete chain of cognitive theories. To address this research gap, the present study establishes a composite analytical framework integrating three core branches of cognitive linguistics and Newmark's translation theory. Based on empirical analysis of authoritative parallel corpora of official terminology translations, it systematically classifies political metaphors, summarizes standardized translation strategies, and explores their underlying deep-seated cognitive logics.

2.2. Research on metaphor translation theories

Newmark [5] put forward seven practical translation procedures for metaphor rendering, from which this study abstracts four analytical categories: literal retention of metaphor, vehicle replacement, explanatory paraphrasing, and metaphor deletion. It should be noted that "vehicle replacement" is a descriptive term adopted in the present paper rather than one of Newmark's original labels. While these four categories draw inspiration from Newmark's procedures, they do not form a one-to-one correspondence with his classification system.

Newmark's well-known dichotomy of semantic translation and communicative translation provides a referential theoretical framework for analysing metaphor-handling practices, though it was not originally designed as ready-made decision-making rules for metaphor strategy selection. Semantic translation seeks to reproduce the exact contextual meaning of the source text within the constraints of target-language linguistic structures; retention of source-language cultural imagery may follow from this orientation, but it is not its definitional goal. Communicative translation, by contrast, prioritizes readability and the comprehension of target-language readers [5].

Eugene Nida's functional-equivalence theory further highlights the expectation that target-text receptors should produce substantially similar responses to the message as source-text receptors. Nevertheless, such receptor-response orientation alone cannot fully account for metaphor-handling norms within Chinese political external-publicity texts. Studies on political and publicity translation further observe that accurate transmission of policy-related meaning is generally prioritized over the preservation of source-cultural imagery in such text types, so as to prevent misinterpretation among international audiences.

Yu [6] has distinguished multi-layered metaphor types, and summarized seven cross-linguistic conversion approaches. In his discussion of culture-laden metaphor translation, it is argued that neither foreignization nor domestication enjoys inherent superiority. Instead, metaphor-handling strategies ought to be dynamically adjusted according to textual communicative purposes and concrete cultural contexts, so as to strike a reasonable balance between preserving indigenous cultural symbols and lowering interpretive burdens for overseas audiences. The findings thus specify the conditional nature of strategy selection, which informs the present investigation of political-metaphor translation for external publicity.

2.3. Empirical research on the English translation of Chinese political metaphors

A growing body of empirical work has investigated political-metaphor translation, drawing corpora primarily from CPC-related documents. Several representative studies illustrate diverse analytical approaches for political-metaphor translation. Xu and Kang [7] focus exclusively on war metaphors within The Governance of China and find that official translations mitigate intense confrontational undertones embedded in Chinese source texts, aiming to reduce potential cognitive resistance among Western audiences. Shifting analytical focus to cross-linguistic mapping discrepancies, Zhao and He [8] operationalize Conceptual Metaphor Theory and classify metaphorical cross-linguistic scenarios into equivalent mapping, biased mapping, and blank mapping, proposing differentiated translation solutions accordingly. Their work demonstrates how abstract cognitive-linguistic concepts can be converted into practical evaluation categories for metaphor translation. From a frame-semantics perspective instead, Chen [9] explores five metaphor groups in the Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and identifies frame-oriented adjustment strategies that conform to English political discourse conventions.

While these studies yield valuable observations on official metaphor-handling patterns, each tends to rely heavily on one single branch of cognitive linguistics instead of leveraging multiple complementary theoretical perspectives simultaneously.

A review of existing empirical findings points to two notable and inter-connected areas for further research. First, much existing empirical work draws evidence from individual monographs or party congress reports. There is relatively little systematic statistical analysis and classification built around complete sets of standardized external-publicity terminology. Second, existing scholarship often describes observable translation phenomena. When explaining translators' strategy choices, researchers frequently draw on Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Image Schema Theory or Frame Semantics in isolation. Analyses that integrate the three theoretical strands remain scarce, which limits the capacity to account for layered drivers behind translators' divergent decisions: mapping mismatches, schema-related emotional divergence, and cultural-frame vacancy can hardly be fully captured if only one theoretical dimension is considered.

2.4. Research questions

Given the research gaps outlined in the literature review, this paper aims to address the following three research questions:

What categories of conceptual political metaphors appear frequently in standardized government external publicity terminology?

What four primary translational operations do official translators adopt when handling culturally exclusive Chinese political metaphors?

How can relevant cognitive linguistic theories fully explain translators' rationale for selecting different translation strategies?

3. Data and methodology

3.1. Corpus collection and screening criteria

This study selects parallel Chinese-English translations of standardized political external publicity terms officially released by China Daily and the Theory China website as research corpus. After manual screening to exclude pure proper nouns and straightforward policy statements without metaphorical vehicles, 90 groups of distinctive political terms with clear source-domain to target-domain mapping relationships are retained. All

English translations represent finalized official authoritative versions, guaranteeing corpus standardization and research credibility. Based on the underlying image schemas of metaphorical source domains, all corpus items are coded and categorized into five groups: journey metaphors, construction engineering metaphors, warfare and struggle metaphors, natural ecological metaphors, and human community metaphors.

3.2. Complete analytical procedures

This research adopts a mixed analytical approach combining the Pragglejaz Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP; Pragglejaz Group, 2007) and qualitative case analysis. MIP has been used as a systematic, text-based tool for identifying metaphorically-used lexical units in discourse. Its logic lies in comparing each lexical unit's contextual meaning against its more basic, concrete meaning observable in other contexts; where a contrast exists and the contextual sense can be understood via the basic sense, the unit is coded as metaphorical. Empirical investigation was conducted in four sequential steps:

(1) Following MIP identification standards, annotate the metaphorical source domains and abstract political target domains embedded within each of the 90 term groups one by one, completing categorical classification and frequency statistics for all metaphors in the corpus.

(2) Cross-reference each term with its corresponding official English translation, qualitatively judge the translation strategy adopted for every individual metaphor, and calculate the overall distribution characteristics of the four strategy types.

(3) Drawing on the composite cognitive theoretical framework constructed earlier, compare discrepancies in the overlap of Chinese and English audiences' cognitive mappings and the completeness of cultural frames, and interpret the underlying cognitive motivations behind translators' differentiated strategic choices from a fundamental cognitive perspective.

(4) Integrate Newmark's dual standards of semantic translation and communicative translation to distill universal logical judgment rules for translating political metaphors in CPC and government external publicity texts.

4. Data analysis

4.1. Five political-metaphor categories in publicity terminology

Journey metaphors constitute the most frequently used category within the corpus, grounded in the universal embodied image schema of "moving forward to reach a preset destination" (*向着预设目标前进*). Concrete source domains such as roads, journeys and steps map onto grand abstract political goals including national modernization construction and national rejuvenation, with representative terms such as the path to Chinese modernization and the journey to national rejuvenation. From the perspective of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the mapping logic of "DEVELOPMENT IS TRAVEL" is shared by both Chinese and English ethnic groups; official English political texts have long employed vocabulary such as path and journey to describe national development processes, resulting in highly overlapping cognitive frames for both languages. This provides a solid cognitive foundation for the widespread adoption of literal translation for this category of metaphors.

Construction engineering metaphors center on the image schema of planning, building and erecting structures, analogizing national governance systems and medium-to-long term policy planning to construction activities. Three vehicles—blueprint, layout and cornerstone—correspond respectively to long-term development plans, integrated governance frameworks and the foundational bedrock of development, with representative terminology including the Five-sphere Integrated Plan and development blueprint. Within English economic and official political discourse, blueprint has long been solidified as a universal vehicle

denoting long-range planning, yielding high matching of cultural frames between Chinese and English. Most metaphors of this category can retain original Chinese vehicles through literal translation.

Warfare and struggle metaphors rely on the image schema of confrontation, overcoming obstacles and securing victory, analogizing complex social challenges such as reform breakthroughs, ecological governance and anti-corruption campaigns to combat missions. Representative terms include the Blue Sky Defense War and the tough and protracted battle against corruption. Analysis via Image Schema Theory reveals that warfare schemas carry intense positive connotations of valiant perseverance within Chinese contexts, yet Western audiences demonstrate heightened sensitivity to vocabulary of conflict and warfare, which they readily interpret as negative undertones of confrontation. Official translators therefore retain the neutral base schema battle while omitting modifying vocabulary carrying intense combat imagery to moderately dilute the original emotional intensity of metaphors. This translational adjustment pattern is corroborated by Xu and Kang's research on war metaphors in The Governance of China [5].

Natural ecological metaphors take natural landscapes, vegetation and symbiotic growth patterns as source domains, mapping onto governance philosophies of green development and ecological civilization construction, represented by integrated conservation of mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes, grasslands and deserts and Beautiful China. Imagery related to natural ecosystems constitutes shared embodied experience for all humanity, with no obvious cultural frame barriers between Chinese and English audiences and nearly fully overlapping conceptual mappings. This category features the highest proportion of literal translation usage among all metaphor types.

Human community metaphors draw on the aggregation schema of families and collective coexistence to interpret international relations and global governance philosophies, with the term a community with a shared future for mankind. Chinese metaphors here are bound to the traditional Chinese cultural frames of collectivism and universal harmony under heaven, while English translations prioritize highlighting the cognitive frame of shared interests among all nations, creating minor mapping discrepancies. Translators fine-tune expressions on the basis of literal translation to balance cross-cultural cognitive differences.

4.2. Case analysis of four translation strategies for political metaphors

Based on the distribution characteristics of translations within the 90-term corpus, official translators consistently adopt four operational approaches to handling culturally exclusive Chinese political metaphors: literal retention of metaphors, vehicle replacement, explanatory paraphrasing and metaphor deletion. These strategies function conditionally according to varying degrees of cross-cultural cognitive compatibility. Typical terminology cases for each strategy are dissected below in full through the composite cognitive framework to unpack translators' decision-making logic.

4.2.1. Literal retention: semantic translation for high-overlap conceptual mappings

When cross-domain mappings from source domains to political target domains and supporting cultural cognitive frames align completely between Chinese and English, translators prioritize literal translation to fully preserve indigenous Chinese vehicles. This aligns with the orientation of Newmark's semantic translation, enabling the external dissemination of Chinese cultural symbols alongside the accurate transmission of policy semantics.

Take the external publicity term the Belt and Road Initiative as an example. From the perspective of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the term is grounded in the journey image schema of "roads", with the mutually recognized cross-cultural mapping logic of "COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT ARE TRAVEL". Frame Semantics analysis reveals that after over a decade of continuous international communication, the historical imagery of the ancient Silk Road has formed a stable cognitive frame of openness and mutually

beneficial cooperation among overseas audiences. Literal translation can fully activate the multi-layered cultural connotations embedded within the metaphor without risks of cognitive gaps or ambiguity. Similar universal metaphors related to ecology and journeys such as Beautiful China fall under typical applications of the literal translation strategy.

Nevertheless, such ideal cognitive overlap cannot always be achieved in cross-cultural communication. Where source-cultural imagery lacks equivalent conceptual associations in target-language contexts, translators must resort to alternative strategies.

4.2.2. Vehicle replacement: cognitive equivalence for absent cultural imagery

Chinese metaphors draw on indigenous life-based or historically specific imagery absent from English linguistic contexts, yet English political discourse contains functionally identical homologous vehicles. In such cases, translators discard exclusive Chinese imagery and substitute vehicles adapted to target-language cognitive habits, lowering cross-cultural interpretive barriers without altering policy semantics.

The rendering of the reform metaphor "*啃硬骨头*" as tough issues to be addressed serves as an analytical sample. The Chinese expression "gnaw hard bones" originates from indigenous culinary culture to metaphorize intractable reform challenges, a culinary cultural frame entirely absent within Western audiences' cognitive systems; literal translation of "hard bones" would trigger distorted semantic interpretation. From Image Schema Theory, the underlying schema of this metaphor is "matters difficult to resolve", which the English phrase tough issue can precisely activate to realize cross-cultural cognitive equivalence. Translators complete frame adaptation via vehicle replacement, adhering to the communication-first principle of communicative translation. The translation of development blueprint as blueprint follows identical cognitive adjustment logic.

Vehicle replacement works when functionally comparable target-language vehicles are available. If even homologous imagery cannot be found for deeply culture-rooted governance concepts, translators have to abandon metaphorical vehicles altogether.

4.2.3. Explanatory paraphrasing: communicative translation for absent cultural frames

When Chinese political metaphors are bound to exclusive indigenous social and governance cultural frames for which English audiences possess no matching cognitive background, literal translation easily generates semantic ambiguity and cognitive disconnection. Translators therefore strip away all concrete vehicles and explicitly interpret the governance connotations encapsulated within metaphors, fully complying with the priority of communicative translation for external publicity texts.

Analysis centers on the distinctive governance term "*亲清政商关系*", translated as cordial and clean government-business relations. The imagery of "intimacy" and "clarity" constitutes an exclusive Chinese metaphor for government-enterprise relations, integrating traditional Confucian interpersonal ethics and contemporary governance norms defining boundaries between officials and businesses to form a unique Chinese cultural cognitive frame. No corresponding cultural reference for government-enterprise interpersonal dynamics exists within English political discourse; literal rendering as "intimate and clean" would trigger ethical ambiguity. Frame Semantics clarifies that the communicative objective of this metaphor is to transmit governance norms for official-business interactions rather than export literal imagery. Translators therefore abandon all concrete vehicles and adopt explanatory paraphrasing to fully restore policy connotations and circumvent cross-cultural cognitive barriers.

Beyond adjusting or replacing metaphor vehicles, translators may remove metaphorical imagery entirely when metaphors serve rhetorical purposes rather than conveying core policy content.

4.2.4. Metaphor deletion: simplification for non-policy rhetorical metaphors

Certain numerical and parallel metaphors within Chinese political discourse function solely to strengthen textual rhetoric and contain no critical policy concepts. Literal translation would impose excessive reading burdens on overseas audiences, so translators omit metaphorical imagery entirely and state policy facts through plain, objective language.

Multi-layered parallel numerical rhetorical metaphors represent the primary applicable scenario for this strategy. Such metaphors are constructed around Chinese discursive rhetorical conventions, and deleting vehicles incurs no loss of policy information. In line with Newmark's communicative translation theory, the primary objective of external publicity texts is to convey policy concisely and clearly; redundant rhetorical metaphors carry little value for international cultural dissemination, justifying uniform simplification of expressions to align with overseas audiences' discursive acceptance habits.

4.3. Cognitive-linguistic explanations of translators' strategy choices

The composite theoretical framework established earlier enables a full unpacking of the underlying cognitive drivers behind translators' differentiated strategic decisions. Multiple cognitive factors interact with the communicative priorities of external publicity to jointly shape translational operations.

Cross-linguistic conceptual-mapping overlap constitutes the fundamental precondition for judging the feasibility of literal translation, a mechanism illuminated by Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Translators tend to adopt literal translation when source-domain to political target-domain mapping logics are fully unified within Chinese and English cognitive systems, simultaneously fulfilling policy semantic transmission and the international dissemination of Chinese culture. Where mapping logics are biased or entirely absent, translators abandon literal translation and select vehicle replacement, explanatory paraphrasing or metaphor deletion according to the severity of cultural frame vacancy. Within this study's corpus, journey and natural ecological metaphors feature the highest mapping overlap, with literal translation deployed far more frequently than for other categories; indigenous exclusive governance metaphors with fully blank mappings predominantly employ explanatory paraphrasing.

Mapping mismatches alone cannot account for all translational adjustments. The extent of vacancy within Chinese and English cultural cognitive frames further drives adoption of vehicle replacement and explanatory paraphrasing, with Frame Semantics providing the underlying theoretical support for this logic. Every political metaphor is bound to a complete set of historical, social and governance cultural frames. Failure by overseas audiences to activate matching frames prevents full transmission of the profound policy connotations embedded within metaphors. Chen's analysis of metaphors in the *20th Party Congress Report* similarly confirms that translators must fill audiences' cognitive gaps either by substituting universal homologous vehicles or paraphrasing directly when confronted with exclusive Chinese cultural frames, drastically reducing interpretive costs for overseas readers. The cases of cordial and clean government-business relations and tough reform hurdles analyzed above provide empirical evidence for this logic.

In addition to mapping relations and cultural frames, emotional undertones embedded in image schemas introduce another layer of translational constraints, which is particularly observable in warfare-related metaphors. Within Chinese contexts, base schemas of combat and confrontation carry positive connotations of determined perseverance, yet Western political discourse exhibits heightened sensitivity to vocabulary of warfare and struggle, which risks misinterpretation as negative undertones of hostility. Translators therefore retain the neutral base vehicle battle while omitting modifying vocabulary carrying intense imagery of violent conflict to dilute the native emotional intensity of the schema and balance divergent cognitive experiences between Chinese and English audiences.

All the above-mentioned cognitive mechanisms operate under the overarching communicative priority of external-publicity texts, and Newmark's dual translation theories help complete this judgment chain. The core communicative objective of CPC and government external publicity texts is to transmit national policy connotations accurately and unambiguously, while the dissemination of indigenous cultural imagery represents a secondary communication goal. As Yu observed in his review of Newmark's metaphor translation system, translators generally prioritize communicative translation and select explanatory paraphrasing or vehicle replacement when conflicts arise between the accurate transmission of policy semantics and the retention of indigenous cultural imagery. Literal translation adhering to semantic translation, which fully preserves Chinese vehicles, is only adopted when Chinese and English cognitive frames are fully compatible and mappings highly overlapping.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Synthesizing statistical and case analysis of the 90 groups of official external publicity terminology corpus, this study arrives at three empirical conclusions. First, distinctive political metaphors within standardized government external publicity terminology consistently fall into five categories: journey metaphors, construction engineering metaphors, warfare and struggle metaphors, natural ecological metaphors and human community metaphors, all constructed through fixed image schemas to cognitively structure abstract political concepts, with journey metaphors appearing most frequently in official international communication texts. Second, official translators have formed four standardized English translation strategies for handling culturally exclusive political metaphors. Natural ecological and journey metaphors with high mapping overlap predominantly employ literal translation, while exclusive indigenous governance metaphors generally adopt explanatory paraphrasing. This distribution pattern mutually corroborates Chen's analytical conclusions regarding metaphor translations in the *20th Party Congress Report*. Third, the composite three-tier cognitive linguistic theoretical framework constructed in this paper fully explains the internal logic governing translators' strategic choices: the degree of cross-linguistic conceptual mapping overlap delineates the boundary for applying literal translation; vacancies within cultural cognitive frames drive adjustments of vehicle replacement and explanatory paraphrasing; divergent emotional connotations embedded within image schemas constrain the moderated weakening of warfare metaphors; and the communication-first objective of external publicity texts dominates translators' overall translational orientation. This complete chain of cognitive judgment achieves theoretical mutual verification with Yu's commentary on Newmark's metaphor translation theories.

Drawing on the cognitive judgment logic derived from this empirical research, layered, actionable standardized criteria for metaphor translation can be provided to frontline translators working on CPC documents and external publicity news. When handling political metaphors, translators may follow a three-step sequential judgment workflow. To begin with, they need to identify the degree of overlap between Chinese and English conceptual mappings. Next, it is necessary to assess whether target-language audiences have access to complete supporting cultural cognitive frames. Based on these two assessments, translators can choose between the literal-oriented semantic translation pathway and the adjusted communicative translation pathway in light of the text's international communication objectives, so as to form a consistent judgment paradigm.

For universal political metaphors built upon globally shared embodied imagery such as roads and natural ecosystems, literal translation ought to be prioritized where ambiguity is unlikely to arise. This practice helps facilitate the international dissemination of Chinese cultural symbols and enhance the cultural recognizability

of China's discourse. By contrast, for culture-specific Chinese governance metaphors concerning government-enterprise relations and reform-related difficulties, explanatory paraphrasing is preferable to prevent cross-cultural cognitive misinterpretation and ensure the accurate conveyance of policy information from the outset.

In the case of warfare and struggle metaphors constructed from confrontation-oriented image schemas, translators are advised to moderate highly charged combat-related imagery while preserving neutral base vehicles. Such adjustments can accommodate the discursive conventions of overseas audiences and mitigate potential cognitive resistance in cross-border communication.

This study also carries three objective limitations, leaving room for refinement and expansion of the existing analytical system. These limitations are not merely listed discretely but form a coherent logical chain spanning corpus scope, research methodology and linguistic dimensions. First, the corpus of this research exclusively consists of standardized written external publicity terminology released by official institutions, representing a single text genre. Longer paragraphs from full government work reports, oral diplomatic speech manuscripts, multi-modal subtitles for short videos and other diverse external publicity text types are not incorporated, making it impossible to capture dynamic adjustments to political metaphor translation strategies across different discursive scenarios and restricting the range of textual genres covered by research samples. Second, this study relies entirely on qualitative case analysis for empirical investigation, conducting static textual analysis solely based on translated texts without incorporating quantitative data such as questionnaires measuring overseas target audiences' cognitive reception or communication effect experiments. It cannot quantitatively calculate the interpretive difficulty or cultural acceptance disparities associated with the four translation strategies, lacking audience-based empirical data to evaluate the actual international communication efficacy of each approach. Third, this research focuses exclusively on parallel Chinese-English translations without expanding comparative investigation of translations into major global languages including French, Spanish and Arabic. It cannot verify whether the metaphor translation strategies and cognitive judgment logic summarized herein possess universal applicability for external publicity translation into non-English languages, leaving a blank in cross-linguistic comparative dimensions.

Addressing the limitations outlined above, follow-up research may expand and deepen analysis along multiple dimensions to enrich the research system of political discourse translation from a cognitive linguistic perspective. To begin with, scholars could build expanded multi-genre and multilingual parallel corpora by integrating multi-modal external-publicity materials such as government work reports, diplomatic speeches and new-media short-video subtitles. Multilingual comparative analysis can also be incorporated to test whether the cognitive analytical framework and translation strategies proposed in this paper hold validity across different text types and non-English linguistic contexts. Furthermore, future work may adopt audience-oriented quantitative cognitive research instruments. By designing questionnaires that measure overseas readers' comprehension of political metaphors, researchers are able to compute audience-level interpretive accuracy and cultural acceptance rates for literal retention, vehicle replacement, explanatory paraphrasing and metaphor deletion alike. Such quantitative evidence can complement qualitative findings and enable more precise evaluation of the real-world communication effects brought by different political-metaphor translation approaches. Lastly, more attention can be directed toward dynamic metaphor translation within digital new-media-driven external-publicity contexts. Research centering on lightweight short-video texts and overseas social-media outputs may uncover patterns of cognitive reconstruction and translational adaptation for political metaphors within fragmented communicative settings, thereby further extending the analytical boundaries of cognitive-linguistics-informed political-metaphor translation studies.

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