

Study on National Image From Perspective of Skopos Theory: Take the English Version of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* as Example

WANG Keren^{[a],*}

^[a] Postgraduate in Cultures and Translation, School of Modern Languages and Cultures, The University of Warwick, Coventry, United Kingdom.

*Corresponding author.

Supported by the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities(SWU1909228) ;The General Project of National Social Science fund (19BZX021).

Received 21 October 2023; accepted 30 November 2023

Published online 26 December 2023

Abstract

This study examines the role of translation in shaping China's national image, with a specific focus on the English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*. Despite China's active use of translation to project a positive image, a discernible gap exists between its intended portrayal and the Western perception resulting from these translation projects. The study employs Skopos theory to analyse the translation strategies, their impact on representing Chinese culture and policies, and the images promoted. Through the analysis of characteristic words, idioms, proverbs, and poetry loaded with China's national image genes, two key questions guide the inquiry: 1) What national images are promoted in *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*? 2) How are the translation rules of Skopos theory applied in the English translation?

Content analysis reveals strict adherence to Skopos theory's rules, identifying six thematic representations through which the translation shapes China's image. The study concludes that the English version constructs China's national image overseas as a friendly and benevolent neighbour, democratic and rule of law-oriented, committed to peaceful development, assuming major power responsibilities, nurturing great dreams, prioritizing the people, and exhibiting cultural confidence. This research underscores the vital role of translation in influencing China's global image and contributes to a nuanced understanding of how Skopos theory guides this process.

Key words: Translation; Skopos theory; Domestication; Foreignization; China national image; *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*

Wang, K. R. (2023). Study on National Image From Perspective of Skopos Theory: Take the English Version of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* as Example. *Canadian Social Science*, 19(6), 98-107. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/13275>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/13275>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Information of China's Image

In today's interconnected world, nations increasingly project their images globally to expand influence. (Kenneth, 1959, pp.120-131) Translation, operating at the linguistic and cultural levels, serves as a conduit for meaningful interpretation and cross-cultural exchange. (Sun, 2015, pp.65-78) This reciprocal interaction contributes significantly to shaping a country's image among readers in the target language. This pursuit of national image building is particularly pertinent for China, aiming to elevate its global influence. (Lawrence, 2008, p.13) Despite this intent, there exists a perceptual gap between China's aspirations and Western reception. (Sun, 2015, pp.65-78)

To gain insights into China and its policies, especially those articulated by its leaders, understanding translated publications becomes paramount. The language employed by state leaders in significant domestic and international events serves as a crucial tool for political communication, conveying government policies and direction, thereby influencing the national image. (Zhu, 2018, pp.89-93) Over the past four decades, China has employed diverse strategies, including translation of political texts, classics, and traditional culture, to promote its image globally. (Sun, 2015, pp.65-78)

Translation, as a key method in this endeavour, has successfully piqued international interest in Chinese culture, language, and cuisine. Notably, the English edition of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* (Xi's book) serves as a strategic initiative in China's continuous efforts to shape its national image. (Hu, 2020, p.13) Through this translated work, China aims to engage a broader international readership, fostering an appreciation for its cultural richness while amplifying its voice and reputation on the global stage.

1.2 The Need for China to Build its National Image Abroad

China's national image has historically been depicted in a negative light, exemplified by Montesquieu characterizing China as a highly centralized state with an oppressive regime. (Meisner, 1986, p. 534) In the 19th century, the image of modern China was seen as weak and corrupted. This negative perception was further reinforced by the Great Leap Forward movement of China in the 1950s and the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. In the late 1980s, political events in China caused Western perception of China's image to hit a new low.

In the 21st century, China has emerged as the world's second-largest economic power and has played a significant geopolitical and socio-economic role, particularly in the last decade.

The international community has paid much attention to China's dramatic development. A foreign attitude survey report by Delvin indicates that over 80% of respondents believe that China has become more powerful in the areas of economics and military exercises in the past decade. (Delvin, 2020, p.2) While China's increasing economic and political power has attracted the attention of other major countries in the international community, the same survey also shows that over 60% of respondents hold negative views of China. (p.3) According to the report, the Western audience and international scholars perceive China negatively, particularly regarding its human rights, censorship, freedom of speech, and proactive rise as a threat to the international community. A prominent American international relations scholar, Shambaugh, has argued that China's growing power may pose a threat to American supremacy. (Shambaugh, 2015, pp.5-8) These criticisms damage China's international reputation, creating misconceptions and false imagery. Therefore, it is essential for China to promote its national image positively and convey a "Chinese voice" to the international audience.

1.3 The Need of Research on the Global Influence of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*

The English version of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, classified as a political text, goes beyond mere translation; it serves as a comprehensive medium for

foreign readers to gain insights into China's multifaceted development. Through the lens of this translated work, readers are presented with a faithful and objective portrayal of contemporary China. (Zhu, 2020, pp.83-90.)

The book encapsulates President Xi's perspectives, policies, and the broader socio-political landscape, providing a nuanced understanding of China's governance and its place on the global stage. In the absence of an official, unfiltered channel for global readers to access China's political discourse, Xi's book, with its wide distribution, bridges this gap. It becomes a primary source for foreign audiences to grasp China's national image, policies, and the guiding principles of its leadership. As a result, the global distribution of Xi Jinping's book stands as a valid and convincing choice for those seeking recent and authentic insights into China's political landscape and its aspirations on the international front.

In 2015, the English version of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* had the highest sales volume, making it the most influential Chinese book worldwide. (Xi, 2015) This book is highly recommended to read by some famous foreign politicians. For example, former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger commented that Xi's book opens a clear and profound window into a leader, a nation, and a civilization that has existed for thousands of years. (Zhu, 2018, pp.89-93) Former French Prime Minister Laurent Fabius believes that those who doubt China's future development should read this book. He says, "I read this book in detail, took notes, and even picked out some very meaningful sentences, which I posted on my website and recommended to more people to read". (p.90) Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder believes that *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* tells foreign readers about the philosophy that China's leadership follows and the strategic policies that guide China's development. (p.91) Xi's book helps the world better understand and comprehend China's development, especially China's domestic, and foreign policies.

Furthermore, the book by Xi Jinping offers valuable insights for leaders of other countries on how to govern their own nations. Sar Kheng, the Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of Interior of Cambodia, stated that studying *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* can help readers not only comprehend the governing philosophy and strategies of Chinese leaders but also provide useful references for devising Cambodia's development policies. (p.92) International scholars view Xi's book as a valuable source to examine China's national image. Nanking, a German sinologist, claims that as a foreigner, he is curious about Chinese cultures and the ways in which the Chinese President Xi Jinping and his party are governing a country of such magnitude with impressive growth in just a decade. (Hu, 2020, p.13)

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Skopos Theory, a pivotal concept in the field of translation studies, challenges the traditional view by treating translation as purpose-oriented rather than solely target-language-oriented. (Reiss, 2014, p.12) This approach signifies a shift towards understanding translation in terms of its intended function, emphasizing the importance of meeting the specific goals or purposes of the translation. The theory posits that the translator's primary task is to fulfil the purpose of the translation, taking into consideration the needs and expectations of the target audience. (Reiss, 2014, p.12)

Within the Skopos Theory framework, three fundamental rules govern the translation process: the Skopos rule, coherence rule, and fidelity rule. Each of these rules plays a distinct role in guiding translators to achieve the desired outcomes in a purposeful and effective manner.

Skopos rule dictates that the translator's actions should align with the intended purpose of the translation. (Nord, 2022, p. 15.) This means that the translator must carefully consider the communicative goal and adapt the translation approach accordingly. (Vermeer, 1996, p.13) The coherence rule emphasizes the importance of maintaining overall coherence and cohesion in the translated text, ensuring that it is contextually appropriate and culturally sensitive. (Ibid) Finally, the fidelity rule, while acknowledging the need for faithfulness to the source text, asserts that this faithfulness should be balanced with the overarching purpose of the translation, allowing for necessary adjustments to achieve the desired impact. (Ibid)

German classical linguist and translation theorist Schleiermacher, as early as 1813 in his work *Genealogies of translation theory*, pointed out that a translator faces only two choices: either try not to disturb the original author and bring readers closer to the author or try not to disturb readers and bring the author closer to the readers. (Venuti, 2021, pp.486-500) Inspired by this, American structuralist translation theorist Lawrence Venuti proposed two strategies in his 1995 book *The Translator's Invisibility*: domestication and foreignization. (Venuti, 2021, p.13) Domestication involves "adopting an ethnocentric attitude, making the foreign-language text conform to the cultural values of the target language, and bringing the original author into the target language culture." (p.12) On the other hand, foreignization exerts a nationalist pressure against these cultural values, accepting the language and cultural differences of the foreign-language text and bringing the readers into a foreign context. (p.14) The study found that a foreignizing strategy, which preserved the cultural and linguistic specificity of the source text, was more effective in conveying the cultural nuances of the original text to English-speaking readers. The study also noted that the choice of strategy depended on the intended audience and the purpose of the translation.

Some scholars have proposed a third strategy that balances both domestication and foreignization, others have argued that this is a false dichotomy. As Snell-Hornby points out, the choice of strategy should be guided by the situational context and the specific purpose of the translation, underscores the dynamic and intricate nature of the decision-making process. rather than a predetermined preference for either domestication or foreignization. (Mary, 2006, p.6.) Snell-Hornby's emphasis on the situational context implies an approach to translation that is fluid, adaptable, and attuned to the specific demands of each unique project. (p.6) It reinforces the idea that successful translation is not a one-size-fits-all endeavour but rather an art that requires careful consideration of diverse contextual elements. The interplay between Skopos theory and the situational context empowers translators to navigate the complexities of their craft and deliver translations that are not only linguistically accurate but also contextually effective. In conclusion, the effectiveness of domestication and foreignization strategies in achieving the goals of translation is context-dependent and subject to ongoing discussion and debate. Skopos theory serves as a valuable framework for guiding the translator in selecting an appropriate strategy based on the purpose of the translation. (Vermeer, 1996, p.13) However, it's essential to recognize that the ultimate choice of strategy is contingent upon the situational context and the specific goals of the translation project. While Skopos theory emphasizes purpose-oriented translation, it acknowledges the dynamic and multifaceted nature of translation tasks, emphasizing the need for flexibility and adaptability in the translation process.

In practice, the application of Skopos theory involves a careful analysis of the translation brief, the expectations and the communicative goals set by the target audience. (p.12) Translators must weigh the potential impact of their choices on the reception and effectiveness of the translated text. For instance, in situations where the goal is to prioritize the natural flow and readability for the target audience, domestication strategies may be employed. Conversely, when preserving the unique cultural and linguistic aspects of the source text is crucial, foreignization strategies may take precedence.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Application of Skopos Theory to *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* and National Image

3.1 The Book: *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*

In the context of China's expanding global influence, the expressions and writings of its leaders wield substantial influence on the world stage. The compilation and

translation of General Secretary Xi Jinping's speeches into *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* is a key element in shaping China's international image. Covering 178 speeches from 2012 to 2017, the book addresses a spectrum of topics, offering profound insights into socialism, reform, culture, governance, diplomacy, and international cooperation. (Xi, 2017) Centred around governance, Xi's book serves as a go-to reference for understanding the Party and country's development in the contemporary era. The collaborative effort behind the English translation involves both Chinese and foreign experts, aiming to convey Xi's ideas globally and present China as a responsible, harmonious, peaceful, and law-abiding nation. (p.6) The English version's global reception has been outstanding, breaking sales records and earning acclaim for its top-notch translation and clear language. Foreign readers have hailed it as the finest translation of a Chinese leader's work in recent years. Supported by a survey affirming its widespread praise, the book's triumph is underscored by its presence in 153 foreign libraries, indicative of its broad acceptance and dissemination across the globe. (Hu, 2020, p.13)

3.2 The Application of Skopos Theory in English Translation of *The Governance of China*

Based on the findings from previous studies, it is worthy to study the construction of China's national image in the English translation of *The Governance of China* book by using Skopos Theory. This study aims to convey China's national image in the English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* is a Skopos purpose to convey China's national image overseas.

English translation of the political text, *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* is a goal of the Chinese government, to promote China's contemporary image overseas. It enables English-language readers to understand contemporary China comprehensively, objectively, and rationally, to achieve the effect of the communicative purpose of translation of the translated text. (p.12)

Adhering to the coherence rule, the English translation of the Governance of China needs to be smooth and fluent, to provide readability and acceptability for the target reader. Cultural factors should also be emphasised during the translation process. In addition, the English translation of *The Governance of China* should also adhere to the coherence rule and fidelity rule, thereby ensuring cultural acceptability and intelligibility to the target audience.

For example, a title from Xi's book, “改革开放只有进行时没有完成时(gai ge kai fang zhi you jin xing shi mei you wan cheng shi)” is difficult to understand if translated literally as “Reform has no perfect tense, but only progressive tense”. (Xi, 2017) In the English edition of this book, this title was translated as “Reform and Opening up Is Always Ongoing and Will Never End” to ensure readers' understanding and readability of Chinese context. (Xi, 2017) This, in turn, will enable target

language readers to develop a comprehensive, unbiased, and logical comprehension of China. To achieve this goal, compilation translation methods and strategies may be utilised to attain equivalence in translation.

To achieve this, this study draws from the lens of Skopos theory to investigate the purpose achieved by using relevant translation strategies, such as Foreignisation and Domestication translation strategies.

3.3 The Purpose of Xi's book in Conveying China's National Image Overseas

The purpose of China's English translations of the political text *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* is that China widely transmits to the international community the message of China's development philosophy, China's development path and China's domestic and foreign policies to create a true national image abroad. (Swaine, 2015, p.3) Its fundamental communicative purpose is to enable readers of the target language to understand the real situation of China comprehensively, objectively and rationally, so as to achieve the effect of the communicative purpose of translation of the translated text.

The goal of conveying China's national image to the global audience is achieved by culturally rich content, including poems, proverbs, and culturally loaded words that are reflective of China's national image. For instance, the table of contents features headings in the English editions of Xi's book, such as “The Chinese Dream,” “All-round and Deeper-level Reform,” and “Economic Development,” which serve as clear reflections of China's national image. (Xi, 2017) Additionally, the book contains Chinese poems, idioms, and forum speeches that showcase China's national image. In this study, we explore China's national image as portrayed in the book through different lenses, including harmonious nation, peaceful development, rule of law, neighbourhood diplomacy, the Chinese dream, social undertaking, and cultural confidence.

Xi Jinping: The Governance of China is a political text. It is practicable to analyse it by applying the theory of Skopos translation. However, from the existing Chinese and foreign literature, there is not enough research on the English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* (Xi's book) from the Skopos theory, especially using Skopos three rules to study on the role of translation to convey China image of China to foreign audiences.

For Chinese culture's going abroad, translation is the most important means and the necessary way. The choice of translation strategy is also important for the accurate transmission of Chinese culture. The accuracy of the translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* is a basic requirement for the translator, and the translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* carries the allusions to Chinese thought in its original form to the readers of the target language and allows them to truly read and understand it. Translators should first grasp the choice of

foreignization and domestication translation strategies. And the translation strategy of foreignization should be chosen in preference so that the translation can perfectly integrate Chinese culture with the culture of the target language. Therefore, its communicative purpose can be more easily achieved.

The analysis reveals that the English edition of Xi's book was faithful to the source language, by adopting foreignization as its primary translation strategy. The book retains many linguistic and cultural characteristics of the source language when dealing with culturally loaded words and related cultural activities. (Ene, 2015, pp.325-329) The English edition of Xi's book aims to promote China's national image, culture, concepts, wisdom, and systems, and to increase cultural acceptance among target language readers. To ensure the original meaning of the source text, it requires the English translators of Xi's book to have a deep understanding of Chinese cultures and languages.

By adopting the foreignization translation strategy, the Chinese source language is well preserved while accommodating the cultural conventions of the target language readers. This ensures the accurate expression of the source language. For example, “一年之计在于春 (yi nian zhi ji zai yu chun)” was translated by English Translation Group in to “A whole year's work depends on a good start in the spring”. (Xi, 2017, Vol.1, p.297)

There are major linguistic and cultural differences between Chinese and English language expression. Chinese language is concerned with counterpoint, rhyme, and overlap, while English language is concerned with brevity, clarity, and logical rigour. (Hansen, 1985, p.492.) Chinese likes to repeatedly use rhetoric such as prose to highlight certain phenomena, while for English, the information is redundant. When translating between the two languages, appropriate deletions and adjustments should be made according to the simplicity of the English language. To let the readers of the target language, understand the content of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* accurately, the translation of Xi's book adopts domestication translation strategies when translating into English, so that the translation can meet the comprehension habits of the target language readers in terms of chapter structure, syntactic structure, expression and writing style.

The domestication strategy is mainly to bring the source language closer to the target language context, and to be close to the audience in terms of language characteristics and expression habits, especially when *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* is a political text. (Venuti, 2008, p.13.) The purpose of transmission is to facilitate the understanding of the target language readers.

As for the idioms that best represent Chinese characteristics, it is especially difficult to find their equivalent counterparts in English. (Ene, 2015, pp.325-

329) The purpose of the English version of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* is to allow the target language readers to understand the conveyed information. Therefore, to make it easier for the readers of the target language to receive the information, domestication is adopted to make the translation conform to the expression habits of the target language. This study finds that the English translation of Xi's book adopts domestication translation strategies extensively to match with the comprehension habits of the target language readers. For example, “邻居出了问题，不能光想着扎好自家篱笆，而应该去帮一把” was translated as “When neighbours are in trouble, instead of strengthening their own fences, one should extend a helping hand to them. As a saying goes”. (Xi, 2017, Vol.1, p.593)

3.3.1 Promoting image of China as a Harmonious and Friendly National Image Abroad

The English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* (Xi's book) employs both the foreignization and domestication strategies to translate Chinese colloquialisms and proverbs. By retaining Xi Jinping's style of short sentences and colloquial language, the translation effectively captures his pro-people discourse characteristics and conveys China's harmonious and friendly national image to the target language readers. In this way, the translation achieves its purpose of silently conveying the message of China's peaceful and friendly development to a global audience.

Example 1:

Source Text: “亲望亲好，邻望邻好。” 中国坚持与邻为善、以邻为伴，坚持睦邻、安邻、富邻，践行亲、诚、惠、容理念，努力使自己发展更好惠及亚洲国家。(Xi, 2017, Vol.2, p.358)

(For those close, seek closeness; for neighbors, seek neighborliness." China adheres to the principles of goodwill, sincerity, mutual benefit, and inclusiveness in its relations with neighbors. The goal is to foster friendly, peaceful, and prosperous coexistence, with the intention of promoting mutual development that benefits neighboring Asian countries.)

Translated Text: “Neighbours wish each other well, just as family members do”. China always pursues friendship and partnership with its neighbours, seeks to bring amity, security and common prosperity, and works hard to ensure that its development brings benefits to all the other countries in Asia. (p.395)

This example is taken from the English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, specifically the speech titled “Actively Establishing an Asian Security Outlook and Creating a New Situation for Security Cooperation”, which was delivered by Xi Jinping at the fourth summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA) in 2014. (p.395)

The proverb “亲望亲好，邻望邻好”(qin wang qin

hao, ling wang ling hao) expresses the idea that friends and relatives wish each other well, and the same is true for neighbours. Xi Jinping's purpose in this speech was to convey to the attending countries that nations should live in harmony and friendship with each other like neighbours and friends. The language used in the speech is colloquial, catchy, and humorous.

To achieve the translation's purpose, the translator used the domestication strategy, which considers the target language readers' acceptance habits by connecting the two sentences with "just as". This strategy highlights the colloquial nature of the original text and faithfully reflects Xi Jinping's simple and unadorned speech and discourse style. The translation successfully conveys the message that China, under Xi Jinping's leadership, is a friendly neighbour to other countries.

3.3.2 Promoting China's Image of Peaceful Development to Foreign Audiences

The concept of peaceful development is effectively presented and explained in the English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*. Consequently, the dissemination of this translated work clearly conveys to its target audience that China is a nation that advocates for peace and remains committed to the path of peaceful development.

Through these messages, it seeks to respond to Western perceptions of the China threat and China hegemony, while projecting an image of China as a nation focused on peaceful development. Thus, the translation serves the purpose of promoting effective communication and achieving the intended effects.

Example 2:

Source Text: 鞋子合不合脚，自己穿了才知道 (Xi, 2017, Vol.1, p.273)

(The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and only when you wear the shoes yourself will you know if they fit.)

Translated Text: Only the wearer of the shoes knows if they fit or not (Xi, 2017, Vol.2, p.299)

This example is taken from the English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, Volume 1, Follow the Trend of the Times and Promote Global Peace and Development, a speech Xi Jinping gave at the Institute of International Relations in Moscow on March 23, 2013. (p.299)

In his speech, Xi quoted a Chinese proverb "鞋子不合脚，自己穿了才知道 (Only the wearer of the shoes knows if they fit or not)", which indicates that the fact that the international community should respect each country's sovereignty and statehood, and other countries should not interfere. As for what kind of road and what kind of system each country chooses, it is a matter for that country and has nothing to do with other countries. At the same time, it also tells the international community that your shoes do not fit my feet. The world is an all-encompassing

place, and each country's people have their own unique culture and beliefs and have the right to choose their own national system according to their own conditions, and other countries should respect each other.

The translator translates the example sentence "Only the wearer of the shoes knows if they fit or not." When translating this sentence, the translator adopts the strategy of foreignization, using direct translation to directly express the relationship between the wearer and the shoes in the source language, which is very common and has a strong sense of life, with precise metaphors and vivid images to convey the message that "Only the people can best tell if the development path they have chosen for their country suits or not", which is very effective and arouses the interest of foreign countries. The translation of the sentence follows the fidelity rule of Skopos Theory, and the translation is consistent with the original text, maintaining "interlingual consistency". (Vermeer, 1996) In terms of translation strategy, the translator does not pursue word-for-word equivalence, but restores the original text as much as possible.

3.3.3 Promoting China's Image as a Democratic and Legal State to Foreign Audiences

The English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* has many discussions on topics such as democracy and rule of law and anti-corruption in China, which help contemporary China's national image of pursuing a democratic and legal system to foreign audiences. (p.260) These political texts reflect China's state policies and ideas. In translating such texts, the translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* faithfully reflects the basic principles of the original meaning of the source language. While conveying these political messages, it also portrays the image of China as a democratic state governed by the rule of law. At the same time, the delivery of these objective and accurate political textual messages through Xi's personal expression is a powerful refutation of the West's negative perception of China's image.

Example 3:

Source Text: "照镜子、正衣冠、洗洗澡、治治病"的总要求。这四句话、12个字，概括起来就是要自我净化、自我完善、自我革新、自我提高"。(Xi, 2017, Vol.1, p.375)

(The essential requirements of "Look in the mirror, fix your attire, take a bath, and attend to your health" can be summarized as self-purification, self-improvement, self-renewal, and self-elevation)

Translated Text: Examine oneself in the mirror, straighten one's clothes and hat, take a bath and treat one's disease." It can also be summarised in four phrases: self-purification, self-improvement, self-innovation, and self-enhancement. (Xi, 2017, Vol.1, p.413)

The example is from Xi Jinping's speech on June 18, 2013, during the Party's mass line education and practice activities, discussing the metaphorical expressions like

“Examine oneself in the mirror,” “straighten one’s clothes and hat,” “Take a bath,” and “Treat one’s disease.” These metaphors symbolize self-reflection, correction of mistakes, cleanliness, and improvement.

In the translation, the foreignization method is employed to preserve the original image and tone, ensuring easy understanding for target language readers. This approach not only vividly conveys the original meaning but also evokes sympathy and recognition for China’s efforts in party cadre development. Following Skopos Theory, the translation purpose emphasizes the seriousness of Party style and discipline and the concrete actions in shaping China’s democratic rule of law system. This choice aligns with the intended translation goals.

3.3.4 Promoting China’s image as a Good Neighbour of Pursuing Peaceful Development to Foreign Audiences

The English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* (Xi’s book) puts considerable effort into projecting China’s national image as a prominent nation to its intended readers. One of the key themes is China’s commitment to collaborate with the global community towards shared global development. The translation is highly adaptable in conveying the intended meaning from the original source language, which enables it to successfully refute negative stereotypes such as “China threat” and “China hegemony” promulgated by Western societies that impede China’s progress. (Denny, 2020, p.105) This portrayal positions China as a formidable power in the international community when viewed from an external perspective.

Example 4:

Source Text: 邻居出了问题，不能光想着扎好自家篱笆，而应该去帮一把。“单则易折，众则难捶”，各方应该树立共同、综合、合作、可持续的安全观。(Xi, 2017, Vol.2, p.542)

(When a neighbor encounters problems, it is not enough to focus solely on fortifying our own fences; instead, we should lend a helping hand. "A single reed is easy to break, but a bundle is hard to break." All parties should establish a shared, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable perspective on security.)

Translated Text: When neighbours are in trouble, instead of strengthening one’s own fences, one should extend a helping hand to them. As a saying goes, “United we stand, divided we fall.” All countries should pursue common, comprehensive, and sustainable security through cooperation. (Xi, 2017, Vol.2, p.593)

This example is taken from the article Towards a Community of Shared Future for Mankind in the English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, Volume II. This is Xi Jinping’s speech at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva on January 18, 2017. With the colloquial tone of the ancient Chinese saying “单则易折，众则难捶 (United we stand, divided we fall)” to illustrate that humanity is facing the challenges of

global climate change and non-traditional security issues, including bio-security, and that all countries in the world should unite to solve these problems together.

The use of this ancient Chinese saying reflects that China wants to promote an image of peaceful development in the international arena at the UN headquarters. Chinese poems are known for their simplicity, conciseness, subtlety, and meaning. However, if they were translated literally, they would not be able to convey the meaning of the original text. Therefore, when translating this example sentence, the translator follows the skopos rule and the fidelity rule of Skopos Theory, makes certain adjustments to the word order of the sentence “United we stand, divided we fall”, and adopts the translation strategy of domestication, so that the translation is rhythmic and proportional, and the audience can appreciate the meaning and charm of Chinese culture. Overall, this translation strategy exemplifies the importance of balancing cultural preservation with effective communication to convey China’s message and values on the global stage.

3.3.5 Promoting China’s image on a focus of the well-being of its people to Foreign Audiences

The English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* conveys to the target language readers that China is a country that puts the interests of its people at the centre. This philosophy is not only reflected in the efforts to protect people’s lives during the epidemic, but also guides the Chinese government to achieve the great achievement of winning the battle against poverty in a comprehensive manner. Readers of the target language will be moved by China’s contribution to poverty eradication and global poverty alleviation, creating an image of China as a country where the interests of the people are paramount in the minds of target language readers.

Example 5:

Source Text: 当官不为民作主，不如回家卖红薯。(Xi, 2017, Vol.2, p.144)

(if someone in a position of authority is not fulfilling their duty to serve the people, they might find more meaningful or honest work, such as selling sweet potatoes)

Translated Text: If an official does not act on the people’s behalf, he would be better going back home and selling sweet potatoes. (Xi, 2017, Vol.2, p.157)

This example is taken from the English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China Volume I* and the title is “Be a County Party Secretary of Jiao Yulu’s Style”. (p.157) The example sentence is from Xi Jinping’s speech at a seminar for county party secretaries at the Central Party School. The translation of this text, analysed through Skopos theory, employs foreignization and domestication strategies. Foreignization preserves the cultural context with metaphors like “卖红薯 (selling sweet potatoes),” conveying humour and moral aspects literally. Domestication, seen in phrases like “act on the people’s

behalf,” simplifies language for non-native speakers, prioritizing readability. The chosen strategy hinges on translation purpose and readership. Here, readability for the target audience is prioritized while retaining the original cultural context. However, domestication may sacrifice some cultural nuances, and foreignization might pose challenges for target language readers. A balanced approach is suggested, ensuring effective communication of the original text’s meaning and cultural context while maintaining accessibility for the target audience.

3.3.6 Promote Image of China with Cultural Confidence

Cultural confidence refers to a nation’s unwavering belief in the meaning and value of its own culture, serving as the foundation for the preservation and advancement of a superior cultural heritage. In the English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Xi’s book)*, the allusions, idioms, poems, and proverbs cited by Xi Jinping are representative of the Chinese nation’s wisdom, embodying its national spirit and showcasing its exceptional culture to the world. Cultural confidence endows a culture with great vitality, encouraging a nation to seek ways to enhance its cultural confidence.

To transmit Chinese culture, the translation of classics is indispensable. However, since most readers of the target language are not familiar with the unique characteristics of Chinese culture, a foreignization translation strategy supplemented with annotations and explanations is necessary to convey Chinese cultural nuances. Furthermore, cultural backgrounds that may not be apparent in the original Chinese version are provided in the endnotes, such as information on the historical figures of Laozi, Mozi, and Li Bai, thereby increasing the international influence of Chinese classical literature.

Example 6:

Source Text: 不要人夸颜色好，只留清气满乾坤。
(Xi, 2017, Vol.3, p.67)

(Do not seek praise for vibrant hues; let a serene spirit permeate the cosmos)

Translated Text: Not bent on praise for its bright colours, but on leaving its fragrance to all. (Xi, 2017, Vol.3, p.90)

In the English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* Volume III, Xi Jinping quotes a poem by Wang Mian called “Momei (Black Plum)” to convey a message about the importance of intrinsic value over external appearance. (p.90) “Do not seek praise for one’s appearance but strive to cultivate inner virtue that will fill the universe.” This line is a classic example of Chinese literature that emphasises the value of inner qualities, such as one’s character, rather than external appearances.

In translating this example, the translator follows the skopos rule and coherence rule of Skopos Theory. In the English version of the text, a foreignization

translation strategy is employed, which means that the translators aim to maintain the original cultural and linguistic characteristics of the Chinese text. In addition, a comprehensive and detailed commentary is provided to help non-native speakers understand the allusions and cultural nuances contained in the text.

The commentary explains that this allusion is deliberately emphasising the importance of the intrinsic value of things rather than their external appearance. This message is particularly relevant in the context of China’s growing international influence and its emphasis on values that prioritise social harmony, justice, and fairness. Xi Jinping uses this example to illustrate his point that China does not seek empty flattery, but rather expects honest and impartial reporting. The poem suggests that true value lies in inner qualities rather than superficial appearances, and this is a value that China hopes to share with the world.

In general, commentary provided a significant example of the ways in which translation and interpretation can shape our understanding of language, culture, and politics. By carefully considering the nuances and complexities of the original text and providing thorough explanations and commentary, translators and interpreters play a vital role in fostering cross-cultural communication and understanding.

4. DISCUSSION

The study asserts that the English translation has effectively served its purpose, allowing readers in the target language to grasp China’s political ideologies, policy stances, political systems, and cultural nuances. This accomplishment has significantly contributed to the portrayal of China as a nation characterized by friendliness, democratic values, a commitment to the rule of law, peaceful development, global responsibility, ambitious dreams, a focus on the well-being of its people, and a strong sense of cultural confidence. However, to address the challenge of enhancing foreign audiences’ comprehensive and accurate understanding of China and overcoming its current passive international stance, future cultural exchanges must prioritize considerations such as the quality and impact of communication, modes of engagement, and strategic approaches.

Cultivating exchanges between China’s advanced traditional culture and Western culture is pivotal, steering clear of culturally rich yet feudal elements in communication. Disseminating Chinese traditional culture to foreign audiences has the potential to reshape their overall perception of China, a facet often overlooked in China’s external cultural endeavours, which tend to convey superficial and slogan-like “political declarations” to foreign audiences. My extensive experience studying in the United States, Europe, and the United Kingdom has revealed a profound appreciation among foreign

audiences for aspects of Chinese traditional culture, such as traditional attire, traditional Chinese medicine, classical music, tea culture, and regional culinary specialties.

Examining the cultural disparities between China and the West underscores the lingering feudal cultural elements within China, contributing to unfavourable perceptions of its image abroad. The deeply rooted “Confucian” culture, prevalent for over 2,000 years, tends to idealize a modest life and criticize wealth as morally corrupt. Confucius’ emphasis on humility and contentment in poverty, exemplified by his student Yan Hui, becomes a narrative embraced by feudal rulers, perpetuating a culture of compromise, secrecy, and blind obedience, stifling the birth of innovative ideas. Confucianism, deified during the Han Dynasty, transforms the vibrant cultural landscape of the Chinese nation into one of compromise and blind obedience, hindering the emergence of brilliant ideas. (Ren, n.d., p. 69)

For Chinese traditional culture to achieve its goal of acceptance and recognition by foreign audiences, it must actively integrate into the cultural fabric of target language audiences and align itself with their customs. Currently, the establishment of “Confucius Institutes” abroad by China does not consider the issue of cultural integration with foreign audiences. Instead, it mechanically uses Confucian “Confucianism” to clash with the Western liberal worldview, resulting in a cultural conflict between Eastern and Western civilizations and leading to the collective exclusion of Confucius Institutes in the Western world, especially in the United States, where Confucius Institutes have been banned and ordered to close. Therefore, it is essential to engage in cultural exchanges with Western cultures using China’s advanced traditional culture to showcase the national image. Low-level cultures cannot influence advanced high-level cultures.

The historical development of human civilization involves the collision between high-level and low-level cultures. In this interaction, high-level cultures influence low-level cultures over time, creating a subconscious and long-term blending of ideas. Initially, there is no distinction between high and low levels when two cultures first encounter each other. Through an extended period, they eventually merge into a new culture. The language of a shared cognitive network will be the direction of cultural integration and development, constituting a new global culture with common understanding.

4.1 Accurately Conveying the Overall Image of Chinese People for Foreign Audiences

Transmitting an accurate image of Chinese people to foreign countries is vital for fostering a comprehensive understanding of China. Emphasizing the cultural differences between Chinese and Western personalities, where China’s core is rooted in the relationship between humans and nature, while Western culture revolves around

interpersonal relationships based on mutual interests. Highlighting the ideal personality in Chinese culture as one that prioritizes collective welfare over individual interests and intertwines personal and national interests. This understanding aids foreign nations in appreciating China’s initiatives like “Belt and Road” and “Community of Shared Future for Mankind” as contributions to global well-being, rather than pursuits of geopolitical dominance. Acknowledging these cultural differences in communication fosters mutual respect.

4.2 Nurturing Cultural Ambassadors Among Overseas Chinese Students and Diaspora:

For effective cultural exchange, communicators must grasp the essence of Chinese traditional culture to flexibly convey its semantic roots in the context of the target language. To ensure fidelity to foreign readers’ habits and contextual nuances in translations, China has invited language experts for *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*. This approach, such as having David Ferguson as the English version’s honorary editor and engaging experts like Olga Mignova for Russian, Miriam Castorina for Italian, Ruhe Suhaile Goindi for Urdu, Gulnur Shaimergenova for Kazakh, Ragnar Bödvarsson for Icelandic, and Li Bohan for German, underscores the need to prioritize cultivating communicators among international students and diaspora. This ensures that the conveyed information resonates with the reading habits of the target audience, facilitating effective cultural exchange. For example, consider the impact of a Chinese diaspora student fluent in both Chinese and English discussing traditional Chinese medicine with a Western audience. Their bilingual proficiency allows them to bridge cultural gaps and convey the nuanced aspects of Chinese medical practices in a way that resonates with Western healthcare perspectives. This not only enhances understanding but also enriches the cultural dialogue between China and the Western world.

4.3 Holistic Dissemination of the Genetic Information Embedded in Chinese Traditional Culture

Chinese traditional culture, encompassing Chinese characters, traditional medicine, classical poetry, classical instruments, calligraphy, tea culture, and ethnic attire, captivates Western audiences. These treasures, accumulated over millennia, embody the genetic makeup of the Chinese nation, serving as a potent force for the nation’s rejuvenation. To focus on these aspects, which resonate with foreign audiences, China should organize efforts to bring the stories behind each Chinese character, the practices of traditional Chinese medicine, appreciation of classical music, experiences of tea culture, and Chinese cuisine into the daily aesthetic experiences of foreign audiences. This involves transcending museum artifacts to integrate cultural products into the routine aesthetic

preferences of foreign audiences. For example, imagine an initiative where Chinese calligraphy workshops are conducted in Western cities, allowing locals to appreciate the art form's elegance and historical significance. This immersive experience not only communicates the beauty of Chinese characters but also enriches foreign audiences' daily lives by integrating this cultural expression into their aesthetic experiences.

CONCLUSION

If China wants to increase global influence, translation projects are an important means. China has taken various ways to project its image internationally over the past four decades. A lot of meaningful work has been done in the translation of Chinese political texts, classic literature, and traditional culture for the purpose of cultural and idea exchange. The global distribution of the English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* is one of these translation projects aimed to promote a positive national image to foreign audiences.

This study analyses Xi's book using Skopos translation theory to promote China's national image. The translation strategies of domestication and foreignization were used for analysis. The study explores how the English translation helps readers better understand the content of Xi's book. To accurately convey Chinese culture, the choice of translation strategy is very important. The accuracy of the translation is a basic requirement for translators. This was well demonstrated by Chinese translators for the English translation of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*. The English edition of Xi's book contains many allusions of Chinese thoughts, which are delivered to the target language readers in an authentic way. In some places, the translators utilised the choice of foreignizing and domesticating translation strategies, and integrated Chinese culture and target language culture.

As a political text, the English translation of Xi's book followed the "faithfulness" principle. The translation is faithful to the original text in content and form, and accurately conveys the information of the original text to the target language readers. One important aspect of any translation project is its effectiveness, which is also very difficult to measure across countries. A possible future research topic is to design research using interviews and surveys to gauge to what degree the English translation of Xi's book affected English speakers' perception of China after they read the English Edition of Xi's book.

REFERENCES

Boulding, K. E. (1959). National images and international systems. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 3(2), 120-131.

- Delvin, K. (2020). *5 Charts on Global Views of China* (p. 2). Pew Research Centre.
- Ene, D. L. (2015). Cultural Models and Conceptual Metaphors in Translating Idioms. *GIDNI: Section--Language and Discourse*, 325-329.
- Hansen, C. (1985). Chinese Language, Chinese Philosophy, and "Truth". *Journal of Asian Studies*, 44(3), 492.
- Hu, L. (2020). A Skopos Perspective on Political Text Translation: Taking the First Chapter of Xi Jinping's The Governance of China (Volume II) as an Example. *Overseas English*, 13.
- Meisner, M. J. (1986). *Mao's China and after: A history of the People's Republic* (p. 534). New York: Free Press.
- Nord, C. (2022). *Action/skopos theory*. In *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Methodology* (pp. 15). London: Routledge.
- Reiss, K. (2014). *Translation Criticism – The Potentials and Limitations* (p.12). Routledge.
- Ren, J. Y. (n.d.). *The Bright Prospects of Chinese Traditional Culture* (p. 69). Shanghai Education Press.
- Ren, J., Li, S., & Zhou, X. (n.d.). *The Bright Prospects of Chinese Traditional Culture*. Shanghai Education Press, 69.
- Roy, D. (2020). China won't achieve regional hegemony. *The Washington Quarterly*, 43(1), 105.
- Shambaugh, D. (2015). *China goes global: The partial power* (pp. 5-8). Oxford University Press.
- Snell-Hornby, M. (2006). *The Turns of Translation Studies: New Paradigms or Shifting Viewpoints?* (p. 6). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Sun, Y. (2015). A study of national image: Domestic image and international image. *Journal of the Academy of Social Sciences*, 1(1), 65-78.
- Swaine, M. (2015). *Xi Jinping on Chinese foreign relations: The governance of China and Chinese commentary* (p. 3). China Leadership Monitor.
- Venuti, L. (2008). *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (2nd ed., p.13). Routledge.
- Venuti, L. (2021). Genealogies of translation theory: Schleiermacher. In *The Translation Studies Reader* (pp. 486-500). Routledge.
- Vermeer, H. (1996). *A Skopos Theory and Translation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Xi, J. P. (2015). *The Governance of China*. Foreign Languages Press.
- Zhu, C. W. (2020). English Translation Methods of Allusions in Xi Jinping's The Governance of China and Its Implications for Foreign Propaganda Translation. *Journal of Sichuan International Studies University*, 83-90.
- Zhu, Y. G. (2018). The English Translation of Xi Jinping's Governance Philosophy and the Overseas Communication of China's Image. *Journal of Xi'an Foreign Languages University*, 89-93.