

Text Features and Translation Strategies in Chinese Government White Paper

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Abstract:

The Chinese government white paper is a formal official document, which reflects the policies, positions and propositions of the Chinese government on major issues. The quality of its translation is related to national image and national interests. Through the analysis of typical cases in Chinese government white paper Chinese Youth in the New Era, this paper summarizes the text characteristics of the white paper, including Chinese idioms, political terms with Chinese characteristics, run-on sentences, parallel structure and metaphor. In addition, this paper discusses the translation strategies of these text characteristics in order to convey the voice of China more accurately and comprehensively, better shape the image of China.

Keywords:

Text Features, Translation Strategies, Chinese Government White Paper

1. Introduction

As official document, Chinese government white paper is issued regularly by the State Council Information Office of China, including human rights, national defense, democracy, religion, rule of law, energy and environment, etc. It aims to provide a comprehensive and accurate overview of the Chinese government's policies, propositions, principles, standpoints and progress on these major issues, so as to enhance the international community's understanding of China. At the same time, Chinese government white paper is also an important carrier of China's national image. Therefore, the importance of Chinese government white paper is self-evident. To fully display the style and responsibility of Chinese youth in the new era, the State Council Information Office of China issues the white paper Chinese Youth in the New Era. This paper takes the white paper Chinese Youth in the New Era as a specific case, analyzes the text characteristics of it, and discusses the translation strategies of this government white paper.

2. Text Features in *Chinese Youth in the New Era*

Based on a thorough reading and understanding of the white paper, this paper summarizes the text features in the Chinese government white paper *Chinese Youth in the New Era*.

2.1. Chinese Idioms

The Chinese idiom is a phrase or a short sentence that is partly shaped in the vocabulary of Chinese characters. Chinese idioms have fixed structural forms and expressions, expressing certain meanings. They are largely inherited from ancient times and are often different from modern Chinese in terms of wording. They represent a story or an allusion.

One of the features of Chinese idioms is simplicity and conciseness. In the white paper *Chinese Youth in the New Era*, there are quite a lot Chinese idioms in this white paper, such as 遮风挡雨, 后顾之忧, 精耕细作, 风雨同舟, etc. Chinese idioms are used in the government white paper to make the information clear and concise.

2.2. Political Terms with Chinese Characteristics

Political terms are not just about politics, they also cover all areas of society. As an official document, the government white paper is political, so it is inevitably full of political terms, such as 非工即农, 铁饭碗, 十四五, 优秀共青团员, 工农商学兵, 科教文卫体, etc. By using political terms with Chinese characteristics, it can display China's unique national conditions and culture.

2.3. Run-on Sentences

A run-on is a sentence in which two or more independent clauses are joined without appropriate punctuation or conjunction.

In the white paper *Chinese Youth in the New Era*, run-on sentences are frequently used. For example, 从有衣穿到穿得时尚、穿出个性, 从吃饱饭到吃得丰富、吃出健康, 从能出行到快捷通畅、平稳舒适。

Although the structure of run-on sentence is loose and without grammatical constraint, run-on sentences can strengthen mood and emphasize the point of views. It is very common to use run-on sentences in the white paper.

2.4. Parallel Structure

In grammar, parallelism, also known as parallel structure or parallel construction, is a balance within one or more sentences of similar phrases or clauses that have the same grammatical structure. The application of parallelism improves writing style and readability, and is thought to make sentences easier to process. Parallelism is often achieved by using antithesis, anaphora, asyndeton, climax, and symphonic.

In the white paper *Chinese Youth in the New Era*, parallel structure can be easily found. For example, 在改革开放和社会主义现代化建设新时期, 中国青年开拓创新、勇立潮头, 经受了得与失的考验, 为推动中国大踏步赶上时代锐意改革、拼搏奋进。

By using parallelism, the sentence structure is compact, coordinated and symmetrical, the meaning is clear, and the logic is strong. What it expresses is not only some thought, but also includes rich emotion, artistic conception, charm and style. It has rich artistic charm and gives people a beautiful feeling.

2.5. *Metaphors*

A metaphor is a figure of speech that identifies one thing as being the same as some unrelated other thing, thus strongly implying the similarities between the two. A metaphor directly does not apply any words of comparison, such as “like” or “as.” It is therefore considered more rhetorically powerful than a simile.

In the white paper *Chinese Youth in the New Era*, there are so many metaphors used to enhance the expression effect of language. For instance, 新时代中国青年素质过硬, 首先就体现在身心素质更好更强, 能够经得起风雨、受得住磨砺、扛得住摔打。

The white paper is to convey information and express Chinese government’s standpoint, so using metaphors can make language richer, more vivid and more pictorial.

3. Translation Strategies in *Chinese Youth in the New Era*

As one of the forms of official political discourse, the Chinese government white paper is responsible for the external publicity and the expression of China’s position. The translation strategies used in the white paper *Chinese Youth in the New Era* mainly can be categorized into domestication and foreignization.

Foreignization is defined that preserving the cultural features and language forms of the source language in the process of translation. The purpose is to enable the target language readers to understand the foreign culture, and to spread the culture of the source language.

In contrast, domestication refers to using the rules and customs of the target language to translate the original text. Domestication translation is helpful for readers to better understand the translation and enhance the readability and appreciation of the translation.

3.1. Translation Strategies for Chinese Idioms

Generally speaking, Chinese idioms have their uniqueness. They have fixed structure, and it is forbidden to change any of the words. Some Chinese idioms originate from a story of philosophy, and they carry Chinese culture. Therefore, it is not easy to translate Chinese idioms.

In the white paper *Chinese Youth in the New Era*, there are some Chinese idioms. Take the following sentence for example:

Example 1: 中国青年不仅能在步入社会之初就享受到社会保障的“遮风挡雨”, 也能在拼搏奋斗时免除各种“后顾之忧”。

Translation: Young people in China are shielded by social security when they enter the workforce, and free from various worries when pursuing their dreams.

Example 2: 在国家创新驱动发展战略的引领和“揭榜挂帅”、“赛马”等制度的激励推动下, 一批具有国际竞争力的青年科技人才脱颖而出。

Translation: Under the innovation-driven development strategy and open competition mechanisms, a large number of world-class young scientists have come to the fore in major sci-tech programs.

Example 3: 只要各国青年团结起来、同向同行, 坚持平等协商、开放创新、同舟共济、坚守正义…

Translation: If young people from all countries unite for the common goal, uphold justice, work in harmony, help each other, conduct consultation as equals, and commit to openness and innovation...

In example 1, the Chinese idiom “遮风挡雨” is translated into “are shielded by”. The literal meaning of “遮风挡雨” is to prevent wind and storm from somebody. The implied meaning is to protect somebody, which is equivalent to “be shielded by” in English. The other Chinese idiom “后顾之忧” is translated into “worries”. The original meaning of “后顾之忧” is to worry about the rear of the problems in the process of advance, which is just related to “worries”.

In example 2, the Chinese idiom “揭榜挂帅” means revealing the list and assuming leadership, especially in military activities in ancient times. In the white paper, it is translated into “open competition mechanisms”, which is the implied meaning.

In example 3, the literal meaning of “同舟共济” is in the same boat. In the white paper, it is translated into “help each other”, which is the implied meaning.

In the above three examples, all of the Chinese idioms are translated into the implied meaning in order to enable the target language readers to understand the meaning. The translation strategy belongs to domestication.

3.2. Translation Strategies for Political Terms with Chinese Characteristics

In government white paper, there are always a lot of political terms with Chinese characteristics. Due to the cultural differences between China and the West, it is important to choose a proper translation strategy to avoid misunderstanding of target language readers. For example:

Example 4: 无论是传统的“工农商学兵”、“科教文卫体”，还是基于“互联网+”的新业态、新领域、新职业

Translation: Young people work in various fields - conventional fields such as industry, agriculture, commerce and the military, as well as in science, education, culture, health, and sports, and now in internet-based new business models, areas and occupations.

Example 5: “非工即农”的就业选择一去不返，第三产业成为吸纳青年就业的重要领域。

Translation: The options of "either workers or farmers" are a thing of the past, and the tertiary industry has become an important gathering place for the young workforce.

In example 4, the term “工农商学兵” represents all walks of life, therefore, it is translated into “industry, agriculture, commerce and the military”, which retains the original meaning.

In example 5, the term “非工即农” is a typical political term with Chinese characteristics. The original meaning of the term conveys that Chinese young people just had two options for a job in the past, but now the young become an important workforce for the tertiary industry. It is not difficult for target readers to understand the meaning.

Both of example 4 and example 5 are political terms with Chinese characteristics, but the translation retains the original meaning. This translation strategy is foreignization. It enables the target readers to know the style of Chinese culture and language.

3.3. Translation Strategies for Run-on Sentences

In order to strengthen mood and emphasize point of views, run-on sentences are often used in the white paper. It is not easy to translate the run-on sentences. In *Chinese Youth in the New Era*, take the following sentences for example:

Example 6: 展望未来, 民族复兴大业已经站在新的历史起点、踏上新的伟大征程。

Translation: We have stood at a new historical starting point and embarked on a new journey in achieving the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Example 7: 中国梦是历史的、现实的, 也是未来的; 是广大人民的, 更是青年一代的。

Translation: The Chinese Dream is a dream about history, the present and the future. It is cherished by all of the people, but even more so by the young.

Example 8: 从有衣穿到穿得时尚、穿出个性, 从吃饱饭到吃得丰富、吃出健康, 从能出行到快捷通畅、平稳舒适。

Translation: from having clothing to wear to dressing fashionably, from having food to eat to eating well for good health, and from taking affordable transportation to choosing fast and comfortable vehicles.

From all the three examples, we can see that the original text is not difficult to understand, in this case, proper use of foreignization in translation can make the target text concise and clear, and avoid misunderstandings caused by cultural cognitive differences among target readers. To some extent, preserving the original structure and style is a right strategy for run-on sentences.

3.4. Translation Strategies for Parallel Structure

Parallel structure is frequently used to strengthen the mood and increase the art of language in speech and the white paper. In the white paper *Chinese Youth in the New Era*, take the following sentences, for example:

Example 9: 青年是整个社会力量中最积极、最有生气的力量, 国家的希望在青年, 民族的未来在青年。

Translation: Youth is the most active and vital force in society. The hopes of a country and the future of a nation lie in the hands of its young generation.

Example 10: 在新民主主义革命时期, 中国青年不怕牺牲、敢于斗争, 经受了生与死的考验, 为争取民族独立、人民解放冲锋陷阵、抛洒热血。在社会主义革命和建设时期, 中国青年勇于拼搏、甘于奉献, 经受了苦与乐的考验, 在新中国的广阔天地忘我劳动、发愤图强。在改革开放和社会主义现代化建设新时期, 中国青年开拓创新、勇立潮头, 经受了得与失的考验, 为推动中国大踏步赶上时代锐意改革、拼搏奋进。

Translation: During the New Democratic Revolution (1919-1949), they rose to the occasion without fear of death and fought bravely for national independence and the people's liberation. During the socialist revolution and reconstruction (1949-1978), they endured hardships and dedicated themselves to building the newly-founded country. In the new period of reform, opening up and socialist modernization, those with a talent for innovation who were open to challenges stood out and forged ahead, led reform, and ensured that China progressed with the times.

In example 9, the sentence is translated into English by changing the structure. Due to the different grammar between Chinese and English, Chinese can't be translated into English directly. It is impossible to translate Chinese into English without

changing sentence structure. Therefore, in this sentence, domestication is adopted to convey the importance of Chinese young generation.

In example 10, the three sentences form parallel structure to express the Chinese young people fought for national independence and people's liberation, and they also made great contribution to the development of China. In the English version, it retains the parallel structure to emphasize the spirit of Chinese young people in different times. Therefore, it is reasonable to adopt foreignization in these sentences.

To sum up, parallel structure is both in Chinese culture and western culture, so it can be remained to enable the target readers to feel the strong mood in the original text.

3.5. Translation Strategies for Metaphors

A metaphor is a figure of speech that identifies one thing as being the same as some unrelated other thing, thus strongly implying the similarities between the two without applying any words of comparison, such as "like" or "as". Metaphors are easily found in the white paper *Chinese Youth in the New Era*, for example:

Example 11: 新时代中国青年素质过硬，首先就体现在身心素质更好更强，能够经得起风雨、受得住磨砺、扛得住摔打。

Translation: This is first reflected in their sound physical and mental health, which sustain them in trials and tribulations.

Example 12: 工作之余“充充电”、“加加油”成为越来越多青年的共同选择。

Translation: Surveys show that more than half of young workers have taken vocational training, choosing to add to their knowledge base after work.

In example 11, “风雨”，“磨砺”，“摔打” are metaphors without applying any words of comparison. They are used to represent the hardships and difficulties. This sentence stresses that the Chinese young people should have strong mind and body to endure the hardships. In English version, “经得起风雨、受得住磨砺、扛得住摔打” is translated into “sustain them in trials and tribulations”, in which domestication is adopted.

In example 12, “充充电”，“加加油” originally means charging batteries and fueling the car, which is all related to objects. But they are used as metaphor in the sentence to express the Chinese young generation pursuit of knowledge. In English version, this sentence is translated into “choosing to add to their knowledge base after work”, which is the figurative meaning. Domestication is used in the sentence to make the meaning more clear and accurate.

In the above two examples, domestication is served as a good translation strategy to convey the original meaning and enable the target language readers to understand the paper more easily.

4. Conclusions

As one of the official literary forms, the authority and accuracy of Chinese government white papers are self-evident. This paper takes the Chinese-English version of the white paper *Chinese Youth in the New Era* as an example to analyze the text features in the white paper, and analyzes the translation strategies for different text features. To sum up, this article discusses two translation strategies in the white

paper, namely, foreignization and domestication. In fact, the translation strategy depends on whether there is a correspondence between the cultural images in the source domain and the target domain. If there is a correspondence, foreignization should be preferred, so as to retain the “original flavor” of the original text in both form and cultural images. On the contrary, domestication should be adopted to ensure the accurate transmission of the original information.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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