

A Corpus-Based Study on Classical Poetry's Translation of *The Governance of China III* from Perspective of Translation Ethics

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Manuscript received August 14, 2023; revised September 27, 2023; accepted November 7, 2023; published April 16, 2024

Abstract—*The Governance of China III* is a representative book to shape the national image and enhance national self-confidence. Its English translation is a window for foreign readers to understand China. In the process of translation, translation strategies and methods reflect translators' choice of different ethical models. This paper takes the English translation of classical poetry in *The Governance of China III* as the main research object, takes Chesterman's five ethics models as the theoretical basis, builds a corpus to explore the application of five ethical models in the process of translating classical poetry, and hopes to provide some views on the political publicity translation of classical poetry.

Keywords—*The Governance of China III*, translation ethics, classical poetry

I. INTRODUCTION

With the continuous rise of China's national strength, it is of great significance to build political power and shape the national image through translation to maintain the international image, improve the national cultural soft power, and enhance the national cultural competitiveness. Since the cultural turn, ethical issues have become another upsurge in translation studies. Translation ethics discusses the norms of translation behavior, involving the translation participants and the relationship between the two languages and cultures. It has important guiding significance for all kinds of translation practice. However, relevant domestic research on translation ethics mainly focuses on the translation of literary works. Ethical issues are often involved in the process of cross-cultural communication, so it is particularly necessary to use translation ethics to guide political translation. From the perspective of translation ethics, this paper analyzes the embodiment of Chesterman's five ethical models in the English version of *The Governance of China III* through classical poetry, explores how translators follow the five ethical models in the process of translation, and which translation methods are adopted.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter shows the findings from some thesis that associated with the main areas of this study. This part mainly divided into three parts, the first part is the studies on translation ethics, the second part is the studies on the translation of *The Governance of China*, and the last part is the studies on corpus research.

A. Studies on Translation Ethics

Translation ethics is the guiding principle of the translator, which involves translator's behavior and translation strategy.

It reflects the relationship between translator and author, target reader and client. Translation ethics determines the quality and value of translated works. In general, the theory of translation ethics is concerned with the conformity of translators and translations.

1) Domestic studies on translation ethics

By reading the literature on translation ethics in China, the relevant studies can be roughly divided into the following four categories:

The first category is to analyze the translation studies of translated works (mostly literary works) from the perspective of translation ethics. For example, Li [1] explored how the translator achieves the balance of translation ethics and maximizes the communication effect in the process of translation.

The second category is that some scholars focus on translation ethics itself and conduct in-depth analysis and research on the fields related to translation ethics. Li and Zhang [2] pointed out the hierarchy of translators' translation ethics demands and its impact on translators' translation strategies.

The third category is a few researchers focus on the development process of translation ethics, they sort out and analyze data, and finally put forward the development trend of domestic translation ethics. Yang [3] made a theoretical reflection on the domestic translation ethics research in the past 20 years (1996–2021) from three aspects. Li and He [4] based on the scientific knowledge map CiteSpace, examined the overall trend, research depth, development process, research hotspots and core research topics of domestic translation ethics research in the past 20 years.

The last one is that some scholars discuss the application of translation ethics through writing practice reports according to their own practical experience. Shi [5] selected cases and analyzed each of the five translation models of Chesterman according to the characteristics of the third chapter of the English-Chinese translation of *Running Away*.

2) Western studies on translation ethics

Chinese and Western scholars believe that any behavior should be based on ethics, because the fundamental role of ethics is to guide people's behavior. Of course, translation activities are no exception. In the west, in the 1980s, Berman first put forward the concept of "translation ethics" and regarded it as an important direction of translation theory research. As a pioneer in this field, Berman advocates a reflection on translation and translators. The core of Berman's translation ethics is "heterogeneity". Berman's thinking on translation ethics promotes the thinking of Venuti

and Pym. Venuti absorbs the thoughts of post-colonialism and deconstruction. His ethics is similar to Berman's ethics of heterogeneity. In Pym's eyes, he tends to explore the professional ethics of translators who promote communication and cooperation between different cultures from the perspective of the translator's intercultural nature and in view of various forms of translation activities. In the process of the continuous development of western translation ethics, Chesterman has also had a great impact on the research in this field. He tends to emphasize ethics in the process of translation. He puts forward five translation ethics models based on the four values of truth, loyalty, understanding and trust, and makes a detailed discussion. There are a number of literatures devoted to the study of western translation ethics. For example, Lu and Wang [6] proposed to criticize and reflect on the western translation ethics represented by Berman, Venuti and Pym from the perspective of the Chinese traditional "Golden Mean" philosophy.

3) *Limitations of current domestic and western studies*

The study of translation ethics in foreign countries mainly focuses on the model of ethical norms, but only studies the partial content of translation ethics. About the study of domestic translation ethics, there are too many studies about similar themes. This paper attempts to explore the embodiment of five translation ethics in a political text, taking *The Governance of China III* as an example, focusing on the expression of classical poetry.

B. *Studies on the Translation of The Governance of China*

1) *Studies on The Governance of China*

Searching for "*The Governance of China*; translation" on CNKI and reading relevant literature, it is not difficult to find that most of them focus on translation strategies. For example, Jiang [7] pointed out that the translation strategy of China's important political documents has changed: from "ST-oriented" for Mao's works to "TT-oriented" for Xi's works. In addition, some scholars focus on foreign communication and national image construction. Based on the analysis of the relations between translations and image construction, Zhu [8] believed that translation is an important medium of transmitting China's image and a self-portrayal of China's image.

2) *Studies on The Governance of China from the perspective of translation ethics*

Through a review of the literature, the following two main documents are available for the study of *The Governance of China* from the perspective of translation ethics: Zhang [9] chose five major translation ethics models as a framework and took Chinese poetry and classical Chinese prose and Chinese common sayings as examples to study the English translation of *The Governance of China*. Lai [10] selected the translation of *The Governance of China II* and classified the expressions into four categories in order to analyze them from the perspective of translation ethics.

3) *Limitations of current studies*

In the process of studying the literature, it is found that most scholars in this field focus on selecting a theory for textual analysis, or discussing the construction of the national image and political discourse, the research content is lack new ideas.

C. *Studies on Corpus Research*

With the continuous progress of technology, many scholars began to pay attention to the research of corpus in recent years. Searching the "*The Governance of China*, corpus" on CNKI, there are six relevant researches, and the publication time is concentrated in the past two or three years. Liang and Bai [11] put forward the importance of establishing a Chinese-English parallel corpus. Zhu and Yang [12] based on corpus under the guidance of Laclau & Mouffe's discourse theory, they analyzed discourse features from home and abroad and figured out the reasons that lead to weakening translation. With the help of the bilingual parallel corpus, Wang [13] analyzed the dominant features of the translation of classical poetry in *The Governance of China*, focused on the three levels of explicit expressions of vocabulary, syntax and culture in parallel texts.

D. *Summary*

Based on the reading and study of papers related to translation ethics and *The Governance of China*, through thinking and reviewing relevant literature, there is almost no research on translation ethics and corpus, which provides a new direction for the research of this paper. This paper takes Chesterman's five models as the theoretical basis, and studies the Chinese and English versions of *The Governance of China III*, extracts the relevant corpus of classical poetry, analyzes all of the corpus from two aspects, translation strategy and translation ethics, and then summarize the data of translation ethics of the self-built corpus.

III. THEORETICAL BASIS

A. *Introduction to Chesterman's Five Models of Translation Ethics*

Chesterman's translation ethics provides us with a new perspective to research translation, puts forward requirements for translation and translator, restores the process of translator's standardization of ethics in translation, and summarizes the five ethics models followed by translation activities. The five ethics models are representation, service, communication, norm-based and commitment.

Ethics of representation is based on the "faithfulness" of traditional translation theory. It is faithful to the original author's intention and accurately reproduces the original text. Ethics of service is a requirement reached after consultation with client. It regards translation activities as "commercial activities", and regards translators as the main participants in this activity, providing customers with satisfactory products. However, only fulfilling the translation requirements of the client can not be said to realize the service ethics, because there are many participants in the translation activities, such as readers, commentators, and actual users of the translation. The ethics of communication is to realize communication with the "other". It requires mutual understanding and communication between the source language culture and the target language culture. Norm-based ethics is to meet the expectations of a specific culture. Norms affect the production and acceptance of translation. Norm-based ethics requires that translation behavior conforms to the norms of the target language culture and the expectations of readers.

These expectations include the acceptability of translation, language style and stylistic style of translation. Ethics of commitment is the standard and oath to fulfill professional ethics. Translators should be strict with themselves, abide by professional codes and strive to do their best.

B. Feasibility of Applying Chesterman's Models of Translation Ethics to the Translation of The Governance of China III

First of all, the English translation of *The Governance of China III* is written by national professional team. How to accurately and efficiently convey President Xi's speech is a challenge for translators. Translators must have good translation ethics, follow translation ethics, and do their best to complete the translation. Second, the English translation of *The Governance of China III* is an official book published by the foreign language publishing house and revised by the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, the Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee and the China International Publishing Group. It is professional and representative. In the process of translation, translators need to meet the requirements and standards of the above parties. In this process, translators need to abide by the ethics of service. Third, *The Governance of China III* compiled 93 important reports and instructions of the Secretary General from 2017 to 2020, helping the international community understand the governance concept, national development, domestic and foreign policies of the Chinese government. This is a book with extremely political characteristics. Translators need to truthfully and accurately convey President Xi's speech to the reader, so they need to abide by the ethics of representation. Fourth, there will be some expressions with cultural characteristics such as ancient poems in the book, and translators must maintain a proper position in the two cultures in the process of translation. They should not only convey the connotation of our own culture, but also let western readers understand these culture. Therefore, translators should abide by the ethics of communication. Finally, this text is a political text with great significance. It represents the Chinese voice and spreads the Chinese culture. In the process of translation, there will inevitably be many restrictions and regulations. At this time, translators must abide by the norm-based ethics. To sum up, translators are invisibly controlled by the five ethics in the process of translation. At the same time, they should have a clear understanding of the five ethics in order to better complete the translation. Therefore, Chesterman's five ethical models can be applied to the English translation of *The Governance of China III*.

IV. ANALYSIS ON THE TRANSLATION OF CLASSICAL POETRY IN *THE GOVERNANCE OF CHINA III*

A. The Introduction to Classical Poetry in The Governance of China III

Ancient poetry is a style with a special format and rhythm, which is represented by ancient poetry and modern poetry. Chinese poetry has a history of thousands of years, and it is extensive and profound, with various forms and profound connotations. In recent decades, China is eager to let the world hear its voice, and the world also wants to know China, so the translation of classical poetry has become more and

more important. Most of the classical poetry in *The Governance of China III* is based on the principle of self-cultivation and governance. They convey the spiritual connotation of President Xi's speech and represent the Chinese spirit, the translation of classical poetry is not only to convey the spirit of President Xi's speech, but also to help Western readers to understand the connotation, and to lead readers to feel the depth of Chinese culture.

B. Analysis of Classical Poetry in The Governance of China III from the Perspective of Translation Ethics

1) Ethics of commitment

The Governance of China III contains President Xi's important speeches. It represents the image of China, and it is a very special political text. The translation process strictly follows a complete set of procedures, including initial translation, translation by foreign experts, the person who revised the manuscript and so on. They will conduct multiple cross-checks according to the original text during the translation period. The members of the translation team are senior translation experts. They are familiar with Chinese and Western languages and the differences between the two country's culture. They also have mastered various translation skills, high political awareness and cultural literacy. Therefore, for these translation experts, it is necessary to follow the ethics of commitment, to fulfill the norms and be faithful to their professional ethics. Translators should study harder and better accomplish tasks assigned by the party and the country. Therefore, translators should follow the ethics of commitment during the process of the translation.

2) Ethics of service

According to the definition of the ethics of service, translators with professional ethics need to provide clients with satisfactory work and meet the requirements of clients. Translators who can participate in this translation task have been selected at various levels and have many years of translation experience. By consulting relevant materials, there is an interview with Huang Youyi, he is the executive vice president of the Chinese Translators Association. In the interview, he mentioned three consciousnesses that must be possessed in translating leaders' works, that is language consciousness, political consciousness and reader consciousness. From these three consciousnesses, there are three basic principles that should be followed in translating the leaders' works. First of all, translators must follow the principle of faithfulness. They must convey the connotation of the leader's speech as much as possible, and thoroughly understand the content of the leader's speech, not only the literal meaning, but also the truth behind it. The second point is to avoid political mistakes. This book represents China's principles and attitudes, does not allow any political mistakes, and requires translators to have a high degree of political sensitivity. The third point is to meet the needs of readers and have an international perspective. On the basis of ensuring the meaning of the original text, translators pay attention to the differences between language style and culture, so as to stimulate the reading interest of foreign readers. However, these three principles are not enough. The translation of *The Governance of China III* has formulated a lot of rules and strategies. All translators need to accept and understand these

rules, and make the best use of their professional ability in translation. Therefore, the ethics of service runs through the whole process of the translation of classical poetry in *The Governance of China III*.

3) Norm-based ethics

Norm-based ethics requires translators to meet the expectations of target readers and specific cultures, which affects the production and acceptance of translation. Translators should be loyal to the client of the translation task, to the client and target readers. And they should be committed to promoting the greatest degree of communication, they should ensure an appropriate degree of related similarity between the source text and the target text. The English translation of *The Governance of China III* has been welcomed by Western readers since its publication. It has become the most popular and influential book overseas, and a model for foreign translation and publishing because of its superb translation quality. This is enough to prove that norm-based ethics plays a role in the translation process, which meets the expectations of both the target readers and China's expectations of the English translation. Therefore, in the translation of classic poetry in *The Governance of China III*, norm-based ethics has always existed, and it is often accompanied by other ethics to restrict translators' behavior. Such as the following two examples:

Example 1:

ST: 于安思危，于治忧乱。(P96) [14]

TT: Be alert to danger in times of peace, and be wary of unrest in times of stability. (P120) [15]

Example 2:

ST: 安而不忘危，存而不忘亡，治而不忘乱。(P96) [14]

TT: One should be mindful of possible danger in times of peace, downfall in times of survival, and chaos in times of stability. (P120) [15]

In the above two examples, firstly, translators abide by the ethics of representation and is faithful to the original text. Secondly, in terms of the language style of the source text, translators translate according to the language style of the original sentence, the Chinese and English language format are similar. It is loyal to the purpose and requirement of political translation, meet the expectation of Western readers, achieve the purpose of communication, and ensure an appropriate similarity between the source text and the target text. Therefore, translators abide by norm-based ethics as well as the ethics of representation.

4) Ethics of representation

Through the analysis of the English translation of the classical poetry in *The Governance of China III*, it can be found that in terms of translation strategies, translators often choose literal translation, and in terms of translation ethics, on the basis of following the ethics of commitment and service, translators often choose the ethics of representation. There are some typical examples in the corpus:

Example 3:

ST: 聚天下英才而用之 (P50) [14]

TT: Assemble the best minds across the land and draw fully on their expertise. (P69) [15]

Example 4:

ST: 道法自然、天人合一 (P471) [14]

TT: harmony between man and nature the underlying philosophy (P547) [15]

In these two examples, there is one thing in common: they both have the word “天”. In Chinese classical poetry, the word “天” often appears, and it has different meanings in different contexts. In Example 3, “天” represents “the world”, referring to the whole world and land, so translators translate it as “land”. In Example 4, “天” refers to nature, and it means the harmonious coexistence of nature and human beings. Therefore, translators translate it as “nature”. The two translations are faithful to the meaning of the original text, and reflecting the ethics of representation.

Example 5:

ST: 唤起工农千百万，同心干。(P94) [14]

TT: Workers and peasants are wakened in their millions to fight as one man. (P118) [15]

Example 6:

ST: 自信人生二百年，会当水击三千里。(P335) [14]

TT: Should I have 200 years to spare, I will surely swim for 3,000 li (1,500 km). (P389) [15]

Example 7:

ST: 生年不满百，常备千岁忧。(P506) [14]

TT: We worry about the next one thousand years when we are only to last less than a hundred. (P586) [15]

Example 8:

ST: 一语不能践，万卷徒空虚。(P526) [14]

TT: There is no use in reading 10,000 books if we cannot even put one of their words into practice. (P611) [15]

Numbers often appear in classical poetry. According to different contexts, numbers represent different meanings. Sometimes they just represent numbers, sometimes they contain Chinese culture, and sometimes they are an exaggeration that make the expression more infectious. The following four examples are digital translations of classical poetry in *The Governance of China III*. In these four examples, such as: “千百万”, “二百年”, “三千里”, “不满百”, “千岁忧”, “一语”, “万卷”, these digital in the original sentence does not indicate a specific numerical value, it is an exaggerated expression. Such as: “三千里” is literally translated by the translator as “3,000 li”. Western readers may not understand the meaning. “Li” is our Chinese unit of length measurement, and translators still chose to retain the meaning of the original sentence, in order to follow the ethics of representation. But added “(1,500 km)” after “3000 li” to help Western readers understand the meaning and achieve the purpose of communication. Through the four examples, it can be found that translators first choose to follow the ethics of representation in the process of digital translation, and then communicate on this basis.

Example 9:

ST: 尧有欲谏之鼓，舜有诽谤之木。(P316) [14]

TT: Emperor Yao set up a drum for people to beat and offer their advice, and Emperor Shun set up wooden boards for people to write down their criticisms. (P369) [15]

In Chinese classical poetry, there are often allusions contained poetry, expressing their emotions through a certain period of history, which has a profound cultural connotations. In Example 9, this sentence comes from “Lu's Spring and

Autumn”. According to legend, Yao and Shun set up drum and wood as tools to let the people come to remonstrate. President Xi cited this classic mainly to emphasize the importance of news and public opinion. Translators adopt the strategy of literal translation and are faithful to the meaning of the original sentence. If they choose free translation, it will make it easier for Western readers to read, but it will not achieve the effect of spreading Chinese culture. The literal translation can lead Western readers to understand Chinese culture, understand Chinese history, and reflect on the long history of Chinese culture. Considering all aspects, translators of this sentence follow the ethics of representation.

5) Ethics of communication

In the process of English translation of classical poetry, between representation and communication ethics, although representation ethics is very important, sometimes translators pay more attention to communication after comprehensive consideration, so that Western readers can better understand the spirit of president Xi’s speech. The following examples all reflect communication ethics in different aspects.

Example 10:

ST: 备豫不虞，为国常道。(P73) [14]

TT: Prepare in advance against the unexpected, which is a basic principle of governing a country. (P95) [15]

In Example 10, “豫” has the same meaning as “预”, “虞” means “prediction”, and “为” means “governance”. “备豫” means to be prepared in advance, and “不虞” means something unexpected. The meaning of this sentence is to be prepared for unexpected events in advance, and it is the usual way to govern a country. The meaning behind the three words in this sentence is different from the meaning of the text itself. It is difficult for Western readers to understand the meaning of classical Chinese. Therefore, translators adopted the method of free translation in the translation process to express the meaning of the original sentence, which is also convenient for readers to understand.

Example 11:

ST: 聚四海之气，借八方之力。(P252) [14]

TT: We should gather energy and strength from every part of the world. (P296) [15]

Example 12:

ST: 一花独放不是春，百花齐放春满园。(P202) [14]

TT: All flowers in full blossom make a beautiful spring. (P238) [15]

In Examples 11 and 12, we should pay attention to the expression of numbers. In the above example of representation ethics, there is also expressions about numbers, but the translation of these two sentences is different from the above four sentences. In Example 11, “四海” refers to the East, West, South, and North China Sea; “八荒” is the eight directions of East, West, South, North, Southeast, Northeast, Southwest and Northwest. “四海” and “八荒” are equivalent to the whole world, so translators translate them as “from every part of the world”. In Example 12, translators choose to translate only the second half of the sentence. “百花” is a vague expression. What translators want to express is that there are countless flowers, so translators translate it as “all

flowers”. The above two examples all reflect translators’ repeated consideration in the translation process, and achieve the purpose of communication on the basis of being faithful to the meaning of the original text.

Example 13:

ST: 相通则共进，相闭则各退。(P201) [14]

TT: economies make progress through exchange and interconnectivity and fall behind because of isolation and seclusion (P237) [15]

This translation is according to the context, and “economies” has been added at the beginning, which makes the context connection better and more logical. The latter part is translated into English according to the meaning of the original text to achieve the purpose of communication.

Example 14:

ST: 舟船继路，商使交属。(P480) [14]

TT: Our ancestors, merchants and diplomatic envoys alike, traveled back and forth along the overland and maritime Silk Roads. (P556) [15]

In Example 14, “商使” refers to merchants and messengers, who frequently communicate with each other and create an endless stream of lively and prosperous scenes. When translating, translators translate “商使” as “Our ancestors, merchants and diplomatic” and “路” as “maritime Silk Road” according to the context, which is in line with the national conditions of China and consider the political factors. It is not only conveys the meaning of the original sentence, but also achieves the purpose of communication and abides by communication ethics.

C. Data Analysis

Extract the classical poetry in *The Governance of China III*, and then analyze the corpus one by one. The analysis of the corpus invited a MTI student, who is also using the five models of translation ethics for translation research, and she is familiar with this theory. We made a consensus on the analysis content and standards before the analysis. We did not communicate in the process of corpus analysis, and completed it independently, then we combined the analysis results. There are some different opinions, we make a discussion and ask professors for advice. Finally, we get a relatively complete corpus analysis result, and the final result is analyzed according to the research steps.

In *The Governance of China III*, there is 121 classical poetry, there are 6 sentences without translation. Among the remaining 115 sentences, about translation strategy, translators used free translation in 19 sentences and literal translation in 96 sentences. About translation ethics, translators complied with communication ethics in 17 sentences and representation ethics in 98 sentences. It can be seen that in the translation of classical poetry, literal translation accounts for 83%, free translation accounts for 17%; representation ethics accounts for 85%, and communication ethics accounts for 15%. To sum up, in the translation of the classical poetry of *The Governance of China III*, translators mostly adopted the method of literal translation, which was restricted by the ethics of representation.

V. CONCLUSION

A. Major Limitations

This paper has two limitations, the first point is that in the analysis of English translation of classical poetry and the exploration of translation ethics maybe not take into account the deeper content behind poetry, the depth of the research needs to be improved. Secondly, this paper uses the Chinese and English translations of classical poetry cited in *The governance of China III* as the research object, and establishes a database. The number of the corpus is insufficient, so the result of the analysis is not comprehensive enough.

B. Major Findings of the Study

The Governance of China III has been published in many languages, and the English translation is the research object of this paper. There are two findings through the research:

First, through analyzing the corpus, we can more deeply that Chesterman's five ethical models are sometimes in conflict with each other and sometimes merge with each other, but they are interconnected as a whole. In the English translation of the classical poetry of *The Governance of China III*, the ethics of service, commitment and norm should always be followed by translators. The most common one is the ethics of representation, followed by the ethics of communication. In the process of translation, the translators are as faithful as possible to the meaning and language style of the original text, and achieve the purpose of communication.

Secondly, through the study and the data analysis of the corpus, the perspective can be extended to the translation of classical poetry in political publicity materials, and get some inspirations. In general, the translation of classical poetry in political publicity materials mainly abides by the ethics of representation, and achieves the purpose of communication on the basis of representation. In the teaching process of political publicity materials translation, poetry can be classified according to different types in the translation, and students can experience the translation process of translators by introducing different types of classic examples. Teachers and students can summarize the rules about characteristics and methods of classical poetry's translation. Classical poetry is a cultural treasure of the Chinese nation, and its English translation will enhance the country's cultural soft power and promote cultural exchanges between China and the West.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Leyun Mei conducted the research, analyzed the data and wrote this paper; Hongmei Ruan, professor at the School of Foreign Studies, Northwestern Polytechnical University and supervisor of Leyun Mei, has contributed a lot to writing and improving this paper; all authors had approved the final version.

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