

The Discourse Construction of Community for the Chinese Nation in the Translation of The Analects

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Abstract—The Analects, as a classic of Chinese thought and culture, abounds with a variety of cultural vocabulary and terminology, and concept with profound and delicate connotations, which is a vivid embodiment of the discourse of Community for the Chinese Nation. Therefore, the international dissemination of The Analects plays an important role in shaping the discourse construction of Community for the Chinese Nation, enhancing cultural confidence, and forging a firm sense of Community for the Chinese Nation. Based on the discourse expression of Community for the Chinese Nation in The Analects, this paper takes popular translations of The Analects to explore how the discourse of Community for the Chinese Nation is expressed and constructed, which help to provide valuable insights for promoting the “going global” of traditional Chinese culture in an appropriate manner.

Keywords—community for the Chinese nation, discourse construction, the analects, translation

I. DISCOURSE EXPRESSION OF COMMUNITY FOR THE CHINESE NATION IN THE ANALECTS

In The Analects, Confucius delves deeply into the concept of benevolence, emphasizing how people should care for and respect one another. He believes that the benevolent should approach others with sincerity and tolerance, showing respect and understanding in speech and action [1]. Additionally, Confucius argues that by cultivating one's own character and conduct, one can influence and inspire others, thereby promoting a more harmonious and better society. He presents benevolence as encompassing love for family, love for others, and universal love. “If for a single day a man could return to the observance of the rites through overcoming himself, then the whole Empire would consider benevolence to be his” (The Analects, 12:1). This reveals the importance of the virtue of benevolence in constructing a harmonious society.

Harmony is the prerequisite for stable and sustainable social development. “Harmony without contention” is reflected in many passages in The Analects. The Master said, “Of the things brought about by the rites, harmony is the most valuable” (The Analects, 1:12). From the societal value perspective of harmony, he emphasized that the essence of ritual lies in harmony. Furthermore, Confucius believed that true harmony comes from the depths of the heart: “The Master said, “The gentleman agrees with others without being an echo. The small man echoes without being in agreement” (The Analects, 13:23). This indicates that “valuing harmony” plays an important role in adjusting social relationships within groups.

The patriotic sentiment of caring for the world is a deep-seated concern for the country and the people. Confucius had a profound awareness of national concerns, emphasizing the responsibilities of “Junzi” to care about the

safety and welfare of the nation and its people. He believed that “Junzi” should have lofty aspirations, prioritizing the well-being of the world and shouldering social responsibilities. “Tseng Tzu said, “A Gentleman must be strong and resolute, for his burden is heavy and the road is long” (The Analects, 8:7). Confucius also focused on the interests of the people, believing that the highest pursuit of “Junzi” should be to contribute to the country and its people, which also secures personal benefits. When conflicts arise between public and private interests, Confucius advocates prioritizing the public good, sacrificing personal gain, and obeying the righteousness of the state. Hence, he fosters a sense of responsibility characterized by “forgetting oneself for the public good” and “selflessness in serving the greater good”. “Tzu-kung said, “If there were a man who gave extensively to the common people and brought help to the multitude” (The Analects, 6:30), implying that someone who selflessly gives to the people is surely a benevolent person who cares for the public.

Confucius emphasized “Cultivate Oneself to Benefit Others”, which embodies the aspirations and the ideal character of “Junzi”. He believed that what makes “Junzi” is rooted in profound inner cultivation and a benevolent outward demeanor towards the people. Self-cultivation starts from oneself and extends to family and society, contributing to the country and its people, ultimately achieving long-term stability and peace. “He cultivates himself and thereby achieves reverence.” “He cultivates himself and thereby brings peace and security to his fellow men.” “He cultivates himself and thereby brings peace and security to the people” (The Analects, 14:42). These discourses express the practice of inner cultivation and the governance of nation and people. Only with internal and external harmony can one be considered to possess the ideal “Junzi Personality”.

II. DISCOURSE CONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNITY FOR THE CHINESE NATION IN THE TRANSLATION OF THE ANALECTS

The discourse construction of Community for the Chinese Nation in the translation of The Analects is mainly induced by three translation strategies including words addition and revision, sentences restructuring, and annotations addition, which are analyzed in detail in this paper.

A. Words Addition and Revision

Language not only reflects the reality of society, but also reflects the way language users perceive and view the world. Putting words in a particular context creates new meanings, and the same words are given different meanings in different contexts. In the chapter Xian wen, “修己以敬” is Confucius' answer of how to become a “Junzi”. Confucius believes that

“Junzi” should cultivate himself in order to handle everything responsibly and in the end to bring happiness to the common people. The ideal character of “Junzi” reflects a kind of national identity that combines the love for one’s family and for the country.

ST: “修己以敬” (The Analects, 14:42)

TT1: Cultivate yourself to foster a sincere manner. (Wu, A New Annotated English Version of The Analects of Confucius)

TT2: He cultivates in himself the capacity to be diligent in his tasks. (Waley, The Analects)

TT3: The cultivation of himself in reverential carefulness. (Legge, Confucian Analects)

TT4: He cultivates himself and thereby achieves reverence. (Lau, The Analects)

TT5: A wise and good man is one who sets himself seriously to order his conversation aright. He wants to order his conversation aright for the happiness of others; He wants to order his conversation aright for the happiness of the world. (Ku, The Discourses and Sayings of Confucius)

Xu Shen, a Confucian scholar from the Eastern Han Dynasty, said in his work *Shuowen Jiezi*: “cultivate” means “adornment [2].” Duan Yucai in his *Shuowen Jiezhizhu* wrote, “adornment” is akin to today’s “polish or wipe clean”, hence extended to mean embellishment in writing [3]. Therefore, the original meaning of “cultivate” is to wipe or cleanse, and it metaphorically refers to embellishment or refinement, signifying the process of making things perfect or complete. Thus, “cultivate oneself” here encompasses two layers of meaning: self-reflection and correction of personal habits, as well as cultivation and refinement of moral character.

Apart from Ku Hong-ming, the other four translators rendered it as “cultivate,” emphasizing the development of a certain attitude or behavior, encompassing the dual aspects of the benefits and detriments involved in forming the virtues of “Junzi,” which aligns closely with the original meaning. Ku translated it as “sets himself seriously,” notably suggesting a serious commitment. It’s worth noting that in latter parts Ku changes it into “order his conversation aright” to correspond to the meaning of “sets himself seriously,” which seems contradictory at first glance [4]. In fact, the latter parts are further explanations of “cultivate oneself,” not new meanings proposed by Confucius.

This situation is not uncommon in The Analects: “Tzu-lu asked about government. The Master said, “Before working the people hard, setting an example yourself,” Tzu-lu asked for more. The Master said, “Do not allow your efforts to slacken”. Tzu-lu felt Confucius’ answer on governance was lacking, and Confucius’ further response was merely, “Do not allow your efforts to slacken.”

Zhu Xi commented: “Tzu-lu asked about governance, and Confucius already answered him. When he asked for further details, Confucius said “Do not allow your efforts to slacken,” and nothing more was said, leaving him to contemplate deeply [5].” This indicates that “Do not allow your efforts to slacken” is an addition to “lead them with dignity, labor for them,” rather than a separate approach to governance.

Ku regarded “sets himself seriously” and “order his conversation aright” as a whole, indicating his comprehensive exposition of “Junzi.” Although this translation method

emphasizes the need for “Junzi” to seriously correct his words and deeds, seemingly deviating from the dual meaning of “cultivate oneself,” Ku recognized the importance of “sets himself seriously” and “order his conversation aright”, emphasizing the relationship between self-cultivation and the well-being of others, thereby constructing an image of the dedication of “Junzi” to family and country.

In the chapter *Yong ye*, Zigong wonders what can be called Ren, so he gives his understanding, “如有博施于民而能济众”. However, Confucius believes this has beyond the Ren, closing to the character of a saint. Confucius values the relationship between individuals and the common people, believing that one should sacrifice oneself for others, which reflecting a sense of responsibility that prioritizes the public good over personal interests.

ST: “如有博施于民而能济众” (The Analects, 6:30)

TT1: “If there is a man who carries out extensively good works for the welfare of the people and is really able to benefit the multitude.” (Ku, The Discourses and Sayings of Confucius)

TT2: “If there were a man who gave extensively to the common people and brought help to the multitude.” (Lau, The Analects)

TT3: “If a ruler not only conferred wide benefits upon the common people, but also compassed the salvation of the whole State.” (Waley, The Analects)

TT4: “Suppose the case of a man extensively conferring benefits on the people, and able to assist all.” (Legge, Confucian Analects)

TT5: “Let’s suppose there is a man who extensively benefits the people and offers aid to all.” (Wu, A New Annotated English Version of The Analects of Confucius)

According to He Ziquan, “during the Spring and Autumn Period, the inequality between the Yin and Zhou people gradually disappeared. “the multitude ” and “the plebeian” merged into what was collectively referred to as “the common people [6].” Therefore, during the time of Confucius, there was actually no difference in meaning between “the multitude” and “the common people”. Ku and Lau use the word: “multitude,” significantly broadening the scope of its reference, emphasizing relief for more common people. By contrasting semantics before and after, they highlighted the Confucius’ emphasis on a sense of responsibility encompassing the world. Waley translated it as “the whole state,” further elevating the scope of relief to the national level, clearly contrasting personal responsibility with national responsibility, presenting readers with an intuitive sense of responsibility and patriotism. Wu Guozhen and Legge translated it as “to all,” greatly expanding the inclusiveness of “the multitude,” helping readers understand that the focus here is not only on individuals and groups but on a more macroscopic “all-encompassing” perspective. Although the meaning is far broader than the original text, it highlights Confucius’s advocacy of Tianxia and constructs the meaning of “community.”

In the chapter *Zi han*, Confucius wanted to live in some remote areas. Some people wonder why Confucius would like to live with uncivilized people. So Confucius reply with “君子居之，何陋之有？”, believing that the remote people can be united if “Junzi” teach them, which reflects the pursuit

of unification of Chinese nation.

ST: “君子居之，何陋之有？” (The Analects, 9:14)

TT1: “If a gentlemen dwelt in them, how could they will be barbarian?” replied the Master. (Wu, A New Annotated English Version of The Analects of Confucius)

TT2: “Were a true gentleman to settle among them there would soon be no trouble about lack of refinement.” (Waley, The Analects)

TT3: “Once a gentleman settles amongst them, what uncouthness will there be?” (Lau, The Analects)

TT4: “If a superior man dwelt among them, what rudeness would there be?” (Legge, Confucian Analects)

Wu Guozhen, Waley, and Lau translate “Junzi” as “gentleman,” but their meanings are not entirely equivalent. From “If there were no men of a superior grade, there would be none to rule the country-men. If there were not country-men, there would be none to support the men of superior grade [7]”, we understand that “Junzi” originally carries a hierarchical connotation. By the time of Confucius and Mencius, “Junzi” had acquired clear moral and intellectual meanings, encompassing status, morality, and wisdom, with morality as its core and wisdom and status as secondary aspects.

“Gentleman” originates from Latin, originally meaning a person of good birth, later evolving to refer to nobility, emphasizing noble lineage and its symbolic meaning. Although both terms underwent similar semantic evolution, the translation of “gentleman” simplifies the multidimensional meanings of “Junzi.” However, the emphasis on nobility and status in “gentleman” corresponds to Confucius’s advocacy of the “distinction between Huaxia and Yi, viewing Huaxia as symbols of noble lineage. It also suggests that if the Yi peoples could accept cultural enlightenment, they could integrate into the Huaxia. James Legge translated as “superior man” emphasizing the status aspect of “Junzi”, indicating superiority in position or authority over others.

Therefore, despite unequal status, through cultural enlightenment, Yi peoples could attain equal status with the Huaxia, reflecting the concept of “unity of Huaxia and Yi” in The Analects, constructing a discourse of “Community for the Chinese Nation.”

B. Sentences Restructuring

The arrangement of sentence structure is not a simple syntactic arrangement, but often implies the translator’s cultural attitude. The adjustment of sentence structure in the process of translation will naturally change the cultural connotation and emotional tendency of the original text. In the chapter Tai bo), Zengzi mentions the responsibility of a scholar, saying “士不可以不弘毅，任重而道远”，in which we can see a person’s patriotism and social responsibility.

ST: 曾子曰：“士不可以不弘毅，任重而道远。” (The Analects, 8:7)

TT1: Zengzi said, “A scholar cannot but aim high and be perseverant, for he has to shoulder weighty responsibilities and has a long way ahead.” (Wu, A New Annotated English Version of The Analects of Confucius)

TT2: A disciple of Confucius remarked, “An educated gentleman may not be without strength and resoluteness of character. His responsibility in life is a heavy one, and the

way is long.” (Ku, The Discourses and Sayings of Confucius)

TT3: Tsāng the philosopher said, “The scholar may not be without breadth of mind and vigorous endurance. His burden is heavy and his course is long.” (Legge, Confucian Analects)

TT4: Master Zeng said, “The true Knight of the Way must perforce be both broad-shouldered and stout of heart; his burden is heavy and he has far to go.” (Waley, The Analects)

TT5: Tseng Tzu said, “A Gentleman must be strong and resolute, for his burden is heavy and the road is long.” (Lau, The Analects)

In their sentence structures, Wu Guozhen, Ku, and Legge all retain the form of double negation that emphasizes affirmation and strengthens the tone, presenting to readers the feelings conveyed in the original text to the fullest extent. On the other hand, Waley and Lau directly affirm by using “must,” which also enhances the tone but evidently leaves a less profound impression on readers compared to the double negation. However, “must” also denotes necessity and requirement, emphasizing regulations or obligations. It can indicate legal obligations, such as requirements specified by laws or rules, or moral and ethical obligations, expressing an individual’s inner demands or sense of responsibility. Therefore, translating it as “must” in affirmative sentences reflects that Confucius not only demands on a moral level but also requires people to prioritize national interests and assume social responsibilities under legal obligations. Such changes in sentence structure deepen readers’ understanding of “patriotism” and “responsibility.”

In the chapter Yang huo, Zizhang asks how to do goodness. One of Confucius’ answers is “宽则得众”，telling people to be considerate to others, which clearly indicates the harmony embraced by the Chinese nation.

ST: 子曰：“宽则得众。” (The Analects, 17:6)

TT1: If you are considerate to others, you will win the hearts of the people. (Ku, The Discourses and Sayings of Confucius)

TT2: If you are generous, you will win all. (Legge, Confucian Analects)

TT3: If he is tolerant he will win the multitude. (Lau, The Analects)

Three translators here have all chosen to change the sentence structure, using “if” to translate declarative sentences from the original text into conditional sentences. A declarative sentence directly states a fact or principle without involving assumptions or conditions. This translation method is direct and clear. On the other hand, using “if” sentences can present suggestions or advisory meanings, prompting readers or listeners on how to act to achieve a certain effect. Therefore, when expressing suggestions, expectations, or conclusions, the use of “if” sentences can soften the discourse, avoid appearing direct or forceful, and give a more polite impression.

Although the original text is Confucius’ explanation of benevolence, essentially it is still instructional, expressing his expectations or suggestions. Therefore, compared to the original declarative sentences, translating into “if” sentences, while changing the sentence structure, can make the discourse more objective and less confrontational, making it easier for readers to accept. Moreover, this translation method reduces the text’s assertiveness and to some extent constructs the harmony of the Chinese nation.

C. Annotations Addition

Annotations addition means to seek with annotation and accompanying glosses to locate the text in a rich cultural and linguistic context, to engender in the TT reader a deeper respect for the source culture and a greater appreciation for the way that people of other backgrounds have thought and expressed themselves. In the chapter Ji shi, Confucius talks about the development of society and country. Confucius insists on uniting people of far-off lands with civilization, reflecting the pursuit of unity of Chinese nation.

ST: “远人不服，则修文德以来之。既来之，则安之。”

(The Analects, 16:1)

TT1: If such a state of affairs exists, yet the people of far-off lands still do not submit, then the ruler must attract them by enhancing the prestige of his culture, and when they have been duly attracted, he contents them. And where there is contentment there will be no upheavals. (Waley, The Analects)

TT2: After all these goals area achieved, if the people in outlying areas are still not submissive, we should win them over with our civilization, and when they have been won round, we should try to appease them. (Wu, A New Annotated English Version of The Analects of Confucius)

Waley provides detailed annotations on the character “文,” particularly noting its similarity to the English word “culture”. The emphasis on culture mentioned in the annotations is somewhat connected to China’s ancient concept of unity [8]. In ancient China, relationships between feudal states often involved both competition and cooperation. By enhancing their cultural prestige, rulers could attract people from neighboring states, thereby expanding their influence and ultimately achieving regional unity. This approach of using cultural appeal to achieve political goals reflects the emphasis on culture in ancient Chinese ideas of unity. Therefore, this annotation serves to enhance readers’ understanding of China’s ancient concept of unity, which aimed to achieve political unity through cultural influence.

Wu Guozhen then comments on the phrase “when they have been won round, we should try to appease them”, pointing out that this was a policy of ancient governments towards ethnic minorities on the borders, aimed at maintaining national unity and stability [9]. This policy involved assimilating, cooperating with, or appeasing them to ensure their sense of belonging and loyalty to the central government. Thus, mentioning such policies illustrates a unified and stable Chinese ethnic community, aiding readers’ comprehension of China’s concept of unity.

In the chapter Zi Lu, this passage reflects Confucius’ dissatisfaction with Ranzi, because he had aligned himself with the Ji Sun family, who had usurped state power. This passage makes a difference between personal matters and state affairs, thus reflecting a strong sense of social responsibility.

ST: 冉子退朝。子曰：“何晏也？”对曰：“有政。”子曰：“其事也。如有政，虽不吾以，吾其与闻之。”(The Analects, 13:14)

TT1: When Ranzi returned from the court, the Master asked him, “Why so late?” “We handled some state affairs there,” replied Ranzi. “Ordinary affairs, may I suppose?” said the Master, “if there had been state affairs, I would have

known something about them, although I am no longer engaged in state affairs.” (Wu, A New Annotated English Version of The Analects of Confucius)

TT2: Once when Master Ran came back from Court, the Master said. “Why are you so late?” He replied, saying, “There were affairs of State.” The Master said, “You must mean private business. If there had been affairs of State, although I am not used, I too should have been bound to hear of them.” (Waley, The Analects)

Wu Guozhen and Waley both provided introductions or annotations to the original text. When Confucius asked Ranzi about the reason for his delay in returning, Ranzi claimed he was handling some state affairs. Confucius considered these to be merely ordinary matters, as he believed that if they were major state affairs, he should have been informed to some extent. This shows that Confucius disapproved of Ranzi’s loyalty to the Ji Sun family. He believed that Ranzi’s handling of these matters was merely private family affairs and not major state affairs. Therefore, from Confucius’ attitude towards Ranzi, it can be seen that Confucius attached great importance to clearly distinguishing between personal matters and state affairs. It also demonstrates his high regard for state affairs and strict moral judgment criteria. Confucius valued public interest over personal gain, thereby fostering a sense of patriotism and a sense of responsibility to prioritize public interests over personal interests, which constructed the Chinese nation’s patriotic sentiments and a sense of duty to public service while forgetting personal interests.

In the chapter Xue er, Confucius shares that teenagers should filial to their parents and respect their brothers and also love the common people, which reflects the benevolence and harmony embraced by Chinese nation.

ST: “泛爱众，而亲仁。”(The Analects, 1:6).

TT1: “Love the multitude at large but cultivate the friendship of his fellow men.” (Lau, The Analects)

TT2: “They should be cautious and truthful, have love for all, and develop closer relationship with virtuous people.” (Wu, A New Annotated English Version of The Analects of Confucius)

Lau translates “benevolence” as “fellow men” and provides a detailed explanation of its meaning in the annotations. Based on “Another answer Confucius gave to the question about benevolence was, “Love your fellow men,” it can be understood that Lau believes that the “仁” here is not in the general sense of benevolence but more specifically “love for people [10].” Although this translation differs somewhat from the original text, it effectively conveys Confucius’ core idea about interpersonal relationships—loving and caring for others. This expression highlights the emotional connection between people, emphasizes universal ethical responsibilities, and aligns with Confucius’ spirit of advocating benevolence. In today’s globalized and multicultural context, this translation is more easily accepted and understood by contemporary readers, transcending cultural and linguistic boundaries, making Confucius’ ethical thoughts more widely disseminated and applicable. This translation approach helps readers realize that “benevolent and love” is not just about building relationships with specific individuals or virtuous people but also about having a kind and caring attitude towards everyone, contributing to the construction of benevolence within the

Chinese nation.

Wu explains in the annotation the sequence of loving family, loving others, and loving for all, emphasizing that nowadays when people talk about benevolence, they think of the phrase “love of all”. This shows that Wu also expands benevolence to the extent of loving for all. Wu’s perspective emphasizes benevolence and tolerance, advocating for extending the concept of love to society and all, which complements the concept of Community for the Chinese Nation.

III. CONCLUSION

This paper analyzes the discourse construction of Community for the Chinese Nation in The Analects from three aspects: words, sentences, and annotations. In terms of words, translation is not just a conversion of words but a process of cultural reconstruction, thus it is essential to consider how to convey the core ideas and cultural background of the original work in different cultural contexts. Sentence restructuring is not only for grammatical accuracy, but also involves the transmission of culture and emotion. Therefore, translators need to find a balance between fidelity to the ST and adaptation to the culture of the TT, to accurately reflect the deep meaning and emotional implications of the ST. Annotations not only enriches the cultural and linguistic context of the text but also helps readers of the TT gain a deeper understanding of the source culture and respect different cultural expressions. Therefore, the analysis of the discourse construction of Community for the Chinese Nation in the translation of The Analects can help to understand the role of The Analects in the dissemination of Chinese culture and the construction of the

Community for the Chinese Nation, as well as how it is reinterpreted and applied in the context of globalization and can promote the global dissemination and influence of Chinese culture, helping the international community to better understand and embrace Chinese culture.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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