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Translation Strategies of Tautology in Chinese Political Discourse - A Case Study of Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volume III)

HUANG Mengyan¹ and XIE Zenan²

¹Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, CHINA. ²Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, CHINA.

²Corresponding Author: XIE Zenan



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ABSTRACT

Tautology, as a rhetorical device characterized by repetition and emphasis, enhances the appeal, authority, and logical clarity of Chinese political discourse. It holds considerable rhetorical and pragmatic value and plays a significant role in the international dissemination of China's political narrative. This article begins by examining the concept, structure, and function of tautology, and then analyzes the translation strategies used to render tautological expressions from Chinese into English. Particular attention is given to the strategies of simplification, substitution, and generalization. Drawing on real-world translation practices, the study identifies a shared goal among these strategies: reducing redundancy and streamlining sentence structure to produce translations that are clearer, more logical, and more culturally adaptable. By applying translation theory to the analysis of political discourse, this article aims to offer practical insights for the cross-cultural communication of Chinese political thought in an international context.

Keywords- tautology; political discourse; Xi Jinping: The Governance of China; translation strategies.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, the emergence of the "discursive turn" in political science has led to increased scholarly attention to political discourse as an independent field of study. Discourse serves as a crucial vehicle for the transmission of political ideologies, national values, and expressions of power (Liu, 2022: 1). In a narrower sense, political discourse encompasses the speeches of state leaders as well as official documents issued by the Party and government institutions. In China, such political texts are typically translated by organizations such as the China International Communications Group (CICG), the Institute of Party History and Literature of the CCP Central Committee, and the Chinese Ethnic Languages Translation Center, along with their subordinate bodies (Huang, 2023: 81). Collectively, these institutions contribute to the formation of a distinctive Chinese political translation system.

Xi Jinping: The Governance of China constitutes a paradigmatic example of Chinese political discourse, encapsulating the theoretical tenets of socialism with Chinese characteristics and reflecting the leadership's governance philosophy. The work is marked by a refined and concise linguistic style, underpinned by political rhetoric with uniquely Chinese features. From a linguistic standpoint, one notable characteristic of the text is its frequent use of tautological structures, often manifested through identical subject-object formulations or syntactic repetition. These rhetorical devices function to reinforce key ideological concepts, while enhancing the emotional resonance and persuasive power inherent in Chinese political discourse.

Current research on the translation of Chinese political discourse integrates both linguistic and extralinguistic dimensions (Liu, 2022: 2). However, the field remains dominated by quantitative studies rooted in corpus analysis, while qualitative investigations—particularly those employing discourse analysis—are comparatively underdeveloped. Moreover,

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much of the existing literature has focused on metaphor as a rhetorical and translational challenge, with limited scholarly attention devoted to the treatment of tautology in political translation.

This study addresses this research gap by examining tautological expressions in *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* (Volume III). It analyzes the translation strategies employed in rendering these expressions into English, with the aim of offering both theoretical insights and practical references for the effective global dissemination of Chinese political discourse.

II. OVERVIEW OF TAUTOLOGY

Tautology, as a rhetorical device, is characterized by the repetition of identical or highly similar forms in both the subject and predicate of a sentence, typically connected by a copula (e.g., "是" in Chinese, equivalent to "is" in English). Although such structures may appear to constitute superficial logical repetition, they serve important pragmatic functions by reinforcing meaning and emphasizing a particular concept (Yin, 2007: 60). While tautology may seem redundant at the surface level, its rhetorical power lies in its capacity to highlight core ideas and attributes through intentional reiteration, thereby generating distinct semantic and persuasive effects.

2.1 The Definition of Tautology

In rhetorical theory, "tautology" refers to a stylistic device in which a concept or judgment is expressed through repetition, either formally or semantically, within a sentence. Typically, this involves the subject and object (or predicate) being identical or semantically similar, often using synonymous or repetitive vocabulary to define or underscore the nature of the subject. Two main structural patterns are commonly observed: (1) the basic tautological structure without modifiers before the copula (Subject + is + Object), and (2) a variant with adverbial modifiers preceding the copula (Subject + Adverb + is + Object).

Despite their logical repetition, tautological constructions are often rhetorically compelling and communicatively effective. Chen Wangdao, in *An Introduction to Rhetoric*(《修辞学发凡》), classifies tautology as part of the "repetitive" subgroup within "redundant tropes," describing it as a method of enhancing expressive force through repetition or synonymy, thereby intensifying tone and emphasis (Peng, 1997: 17). Similarly, Lü Shuxiang, in *A Brief Outline of Chinese Grammar*(《中国文法要略》), examines tautology from both grammatical and functional perspectives, noting its capacity to convey ideas in a concise, direct, and logically cohesive manner. Zhang Gong (1963) introduced the specific term "tautological form"(同语式), and in *Modern Chinese Rhetoric*(《现代汉语修辞学》), he further explains that this construction involves the use of the same word as both subject and predicate, forming a compressed judgment sentence. According to Zhang, this repetition creates a syntactically concise yet semantically rich form of expression—what he defines as the "tautological form."

2.2 The Type of Tautology

Based on pragmatic functions, tautologies are commonly categorized into three types: emphatic tautology, concessional tautology, and explanatory tautology (Ma, 1983: 63–64). In *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* (Volume III), tautology is extensively employed for its rhetorical strength. Emphatic tautology deepens the expression of China's political ideals, concessional tautology demonstrates the rationality and adaptability of political discourse, and explanatory tautology serves to clarify political ideas and national goals.

2.2.1 Emphatic Tautology

Emphatic tautology refers to sentence structures in which the predicate reinforces or intensifies the subject, typically in a concise, assertive, and semantically affirmative manner. These expressions frequently incorporate mood- or intensity-modifying adverbs such as "就" (just), "总" (always), "终究" (eventually), and "毕竟" (after all), which serve to amplify the emotional appeal and ideological significance of the statement. Consider the following example:

我们党要求全党同志不忘初心、牢记使命,就是要提醒全党同志,党的初心和使命是党的性质宗旨、理想信念、奋斗目标的集中体现,越是长期执政,越不能丢掉马克思主义政党的本色,越不能忘记党的初心使命,越不能丧失自我革命精神。

This passage employs emphatic repetition—most notably through the "越……越……" structure—to highlight the central theme of "不忘初心、牢记使命". The reiteration not only underscores the ideological essence of the Party's founding mission but also serves as a rhetorical call for vigilance, continuity, and collective commitment among Party members.

In political discourse, such emphatic tautologies function to consolidate authority, assert ideological consistency, and reinforce the moral legitimacy of leadership. When translating such constructions, it is crucial to preserve their emphatic tone and assertive intent in order to maintain both their rhetorical strength and political function in cross-cultural communication.

2.2.2 Concessional Tautology

Concessional tautology presents a dual-layered structure in which the first clause acknowledges a particular view or fact, while the second clause, often introduced by contrastive connectors, provides a clarification or counterpoint. Common

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conjunctions include "虽然" (although), "尽管" (despite), followed by transitional markers such as "就是" (that is), "可" (however), "倒" (yet), or "不过" (nevertheless). These constructions typically form compound-complex sentences where the concessive clause sets a conditional tone, and the main clause reaffirms a more assertive position. For example:

尽管世界社会主义在发展中也会出现曲折,但人类社会发展的总趋势没有改变,也不会改变。

Here, the concessive phrase "尽管……但……" constructs a tautological framework that acknowledges possible difficulties while firmly reaffirming ideological confidence. This structure reflects both the rational awareness and the strategic optimism embedded in China's political discourse.

2.2.3 Explanatory Tautology

Explanatory tautology functions to define or clarify a subject's essential nature, features, or conceptual meaning through the repetition of similar terms. This type is frequently employed in policy discourse and theoretical elaboration to enhance clarity and reduce ambiguity. As Zhang Zhigong noted, explanatory tautology reflects expressions like "要什么,是什么" ("what it wants, is what it is") and aims to be "清清楚楚、一点不含糊" ("clear and unambiguous") (Zhang, 1953, p. 113). An example is:

习近平指出,中国的发展道路就是中国特色社会主义道路。

In this example, the verb "is" plays an explanatory role, identifying China's development path in unequivocal terms. The tautological structure thus highlights the definitional clarity and ideological certainty of China's policy trajectory.

2.3 The Function of Tautology

In Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volume III), tautology is frequently employed as a rhetorical device to articulate the core ideology, governance principles, and developmental trajectory under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC). By repeating and reinforcing key concepts, tautology enhances both the ideological clarity and persuasive power of political discourse.

According to Herbert Paul Grice's Cooperative Principle (1913–1988), effective communication is guided by four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relevance, and Manner. The Maxim of Quantity requires speakers to provide an appropriate amount of information—neither excessive nor insufficient. When this maxim is deliberately flouted, resulting in redundancy, repetition, or seemingly superfluous detail, listeners are prompted to infer additional layers of meaning—known as conversational implicatures.

The Maxim of Quality stipulates that speakers should convey truthful, verifiable information. Violations of this maxim, such as contradictions or unsubstantiated claims, encourage listeners to engage in contextual reasoning to interpret the speaker's underlying intent. Such rhetorical strategies often elicit strong persuasive effects by stimulating deeper reflection on the intended ideological message.

The Maxim of Relevance emphasizes the need for contributions to be pertinent to the topic at hand. When information appears tangential or irrelevant but is contextually significant, it signals to the audience that the association is intentional, thereby encouraging the interpretation of implicit themes. This is particularly common in political discourse, where overt or covert associations are used to provoke critical engagement.

The Maxim of Manner calls for clarity, brevity, and the avoidance of ambiguity. When speakers adopt a style that is deliberately complex, obscure, or indirect, it may serve rhetorical functions beyond immediate comprehension. Such complexity can guide the audience toward deeper levels of interpretation, generating richer, more nuanced conversational meanings.

Tautological constructions in the form of "NP + Adverb + 是 + NP," whether affirmative or negative, frequently violate one or more of these maxims—particularly those of Quantity and Relevance—through intentional redundancy or contradiction. As noted by Yin (2007: 62), these violations give rise to layered communicative effects and rich rhetorical implications, thereby reinforcing the strategic depth of Chinese political discourse.

III. TRANSLATION STRATEGIES OF TAUTOLOGY

Tautology, as a rhetorical device, enhances the expression of a concept by repeating or reinforcing the subject and object within a grammatical structure. This rhetorical technique is commonly used to strengthen an argument or to logically emphasize a proposition. In the typical political text *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, tautology is widely employed to reinforce political ideologies, values, and the authority of leaders. When translating tautological rhetoric, translators must address the dual demands of linguistic form and context, ensuring that the political direction of the original text is preserved while maintaining its pragmatic effects and cultural connotations in the target language. Based on the pragmatic value of tautology, a discourse analysis of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* (Volume III) summarizes the rhetorical convergence techniques used in its translation (Deng Zhongmin, 2020: 136), and further deduces systematic translation strategies for such rhetorical devices.

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3.1 Simplification

Simplification refers to the conscious process by which a translator simplifies the information from the source language, making the target text more concise and easier to understand in terms of vocabulary, syntax, and style. Mona Baker (1996: 176) argues that the target language text often tends to be simplified compared to the original text. This strategy is widely used in translation to optimize the efficiency of information delivery and enhance the acceptability of the target language. The simplification translation strategy includes lexical simplification and syntactic simplification. The former involves replacing complex or rare words in the original with simpler, more accessible vocabulary, while the latter entails breaking down complex or embedded sentences into simpler structures, reducing the use of modifiers or subordinate clauses, thereby highlighting the core meaning.

Source Text:实现伟大梦想,必须建设伟大工程。<u>这个伟大工程就是我们党正在深入推进的党的建设新的伟大工</u>程。

Target Text: Realizing our great dream demands a great project. This project is the great new project of strengthening the Party that is building momentum.

In the source text,

"实现伟大梦想,必须建设伟大工程。这个伟大工程就是我们党正在深入推进的党的建设新的伟大工程",

The rhetorical repetition of "伟大工程" ("great project") serves to reinforce the significance of Party building in the realization of national aspirations. The English translation— "Realizing our great dream demands a great project. This project is the great new project of strengthening the Party that is building momentum"—reflects a strategic simplification in response to cross-linguistic rhetorical differences.

Due to the tendency of English discourse to avoid redundancy, translators often employ simplification strategies when rendering Chinese tautologies. In this case, the repetitive expression "伟大工程" is partially condensed through the substitution of "this project" for the repeated phrase "great project." Additionally, the original syntactically dense structure—"这个伟大工程就是……党的建设新的伟大工程"—is restructured into two shorter, more fluid sentences. This segmentation not only improves readability but also reduces syntactic complexity by avoiding heavily nested subordinate clauses.

Such adjustments exemplify how translation strategies balance fidelity to the source text with the expectations of clarity, conciseness, and coherence in the target language. In *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* (Volume III), the use of synonymous expressions and syntactic reorganization reflects a broader trend in political translation—preserving the ideological message while enhancing accessibility for an international readership.

Source text:党的十九大作出中国特色社会主义进入新时代这个重大政治论断,我们必须认识到,<u>这个新时代是中国特色社会主义新时代,而不是别的什么新时代。</u>党要在新的历史方位上实现新时代党的历史使命,最根本的就是要高举中国特色社会主义伟大旗帜。

Target text: The 19th CPC National Congress reached a major political conclusion that socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era. We must realize that this era is one for socialism with Chinese characteristics, not for some other models. It is fundamental that the Party uphold Chinese socialism so as to realize its historic mission in the new era.

In the source text-

"党的十九大作出中国特色社会主义进入新时代这个重大政治论断,我们必须认识到,这个新时代是中国特色社会主义新时代,而不是别的什么新时代。党要在新的历史方位上实现新时代党的历史使命,最根本的就是要高举中国特色社会主义伟大旗帜"—the term "新时代" ("new era") is reiterated multiple times to establish and reinforce the political framing of "a new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics," while simultaneously excluding alternative interpretations or competing narratives of what constitutes a "new era." This repeated emphasis exemplifies the use of tautological rhetoric to affirm ideological singularity and assert political clarity. The translator simplifies the repeated phrase "新时代" through the use of referential terms such as "this era" and the more abstract expression "some other models." This approach reflects a deliberate effort to avoid redundancy in English, which tends to privilege syntactic economy and clarity over repetition for rhetorical force.

By employing concise sentence structures and lexical variation, the translation preserves the original's core ideological message—namely, the exclusive association of the "new era" with Chinese socialism—while enhancing readability and rhetorical appropriateness for an international audience. This instance illustrates a typical strategy in the translation of Chinese political discourse: reducing surface-level repetition while retaining the original's emphasis, exclusivity, and political intent.

3.2 Substitution

Substitution is a translation strategy that involves the use of synonyms, pronouns, or other linguistic devices to avoid unnecessary repetition and verbosity in direct translation, while retaining the core meaning and rhetorical effect of the source text. During the translation process, the translator replaces the literal rendering of the original with vocabulary,

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phrases, syntactic structures, or rhetorical forms that better align with the linguistic norms and cultural conventions of the target language. This approach enhances the fluency, naturalness, and overall acceptability of the translated text.

At its core, the substitution strategy aims to achieve semantic similarity and functional equivalence between source and target expressions. Rather than pursuing formal correspondence, substitution prioritizes communicative effectiveness, ensuring that the rhetorical purpose of the original—whether emphasis, cohesion, or stylistic elegance—is preserved within a culturally appropriate and linguistically coherent framework in the target language.

Source Text:人民是历史的创造者,人民是真正的英雄。波澜壮阔的中华民族发展史是中国人民书写的!博大精深的中华文明是中国人民创造的!历久弥新的中华民族精神是中国人民培育的!中华民族迎来了从站起来、富起来到强起来的伟大飞跃是中国人民奋斗出来的!

Target text: The people are the creators of history. The people are the true heroes. The magnificent history of Chinese nation has been written by the Chinese people. The extensive and profound Chinese civilization has been created by the Chinese people. The spirit of the Chinese nation, kept fresh and alive throughout history, has been cultivated by the Chinese people. The endeavor of the Chinese people has led to a tremendous transformation of the Chinese nation: It has stood up, become better off and grown in strength.

The original passage uses the active voice "中国人民书写的"to emphasize the subjectivity of "the people". The translation adjusts this to the passive voice "has been written by the Chinese people", shifting the focus to "the magnificent history". The passive voice aligns with English logic, highlighting the significance of the subject (the history of the Chinese nation's development), while still retaining the contribution of "the people", with "by the Chinese people" providing additional clarification. The original text uses a complete declarative sentence to directly express that the "中华民族精神是中国人民培育的". In the translation, the main clause "has been cultivated by the Chinese people" is combined with the subordinate phrase "kept fresh and alive throughout history", thereby making the description of "中华民族精神"more concrete.

Source Text:中国发展道路,就是中国特色社会主义道路。我们走这条道路,是历史的选择、人民的选择。

Target Text: China's development path is the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics. It is a choice of the times and of the people.

The term "道路" in the original passage is an abstract political term, which is simply and clearly translated as "path". The original phrase "我们走这条道路" uses "我们" as the subject for subjective expression. In the translation, the subject is replaced with "it", focusing on "this path" and aligning the sentence structure with the logic of objective narration in English. The original sentence is relatively long, containing the coordinated elements "历史的选择" and "人民的选择". The translation simplifies this to a "choice of the times and of the people" to avoid the repetition of "choice", while "the times" and "the people" are used for further clarification, preserving the logical equivalence of the original meaning.

3.3 Summarization

Summarization refers to the use of broader or more highly refined words or phrases in translation to replace detailed or repetitive expressions in the original text, emphasizing the core concept and avoiding verbosity or awkwardness in the translated text. During the translation process, the translator extracts the core content of the original text and substitutes complex or detailed descriptions with concise, general, or abstract expressions to highlight the core meaning. This strategy is particularly useful for avoiding excessive length, enhancing fluency, or dealing with situations where equivalent detailed expressions do not exist in the target language. The summarization strategy emphasizes the effectiveness of information delivery and the acceptability of expressions in the target language, making it especially suitable for high-information texts, the simplification of complex sentence structures, and cultural adaptation in cross-cultural translation.

Source Text:中国共产党人的<u>初心和使命</u>,就是为中国人民谋幸福,为中华民族谋复兴。这个<u>初心和使命</u>是激励中国共产党人不断前进的根本动力。全党同志一定要<u>永远</u>与人民同呼吸、共命运、心连心,<u>永远</u>把人民对美好生活的向往作为奋斗目标,以永不懈怠的精神状态和一往无前的奋斗姿态,继续朝着实现中华民族伟大复兴的宏伟目标奋勇前进。

Target Text: The original aspiration and mission of Chinese Communists is to seek happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation. This original aspiration, this mission, is what inspires Chinese Communists to advance. In our Party, each and every one of us must always breathe the same air as the people, share the same future and stay truly connected to them. The aspirations of the people to live a better life must always be the focus of our efforts. We must keep on striving with endless energy towards the great goal of national rejuvenation.

The phrases "谋幸福" and "谋复兴" in the original text are action-object phrases, which are summarized in the translation as "to seek happiness" and "rejuvenation". The verb "seek" expresses the purposeful nature of the action, aligning with the concise expression typical in English. The rhetorical device of "同语"(lexical generalization) is employed, making the translation more concise while retaining the focus and main idea of the original.

In terms of sentence structure, the original is a complex sentence that emphasizes "初心和使命" as the driving force. In the translation, "is what inspires…" removes the abstract phrase "根本动力" and directly uses "inspires" to

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summarize its function. The phrase "同呼吸、共命运、心连心" is condensed into "breathe the same air as the people, share the same future, and stay truly connected to them". In English, three parallel phrases are used to encapsulate the multiple levels of rhetoric in the Chinese version, preserving the emphasis while avoiding lengthy expressions. The phrase "以永不懈怠的精神状态和一往无前的奋斗姿态" is summarized as "keep on striving with endless energy", where the rhetorical description is distilled into dynamic action, more in line with English language style.

Source Text:中国共产党是为中国人民谋幸福的政党,也是为人类进步事业而奋斗的政党。

Target Text : The Communist party of China strives for both the well-being of the Chinese people and human progress.

In the original text, "为中国人民谋幸福的政党" and "为人类进步事业而奋斗的政党" are two lengthy attributive phrases. The translation condenses them into verb phrases "strives for..." to directly describe the role of the political party. This verb-based expression simplifies the sentence structure while retaining the core content. The term "事业" is a formal word, and the translation uses the more concise term "progress" to summarize it, making the expression more compact and direct.

In Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volume III), tautology is frequently employed as a rhetorical device to reinforce ideological discourse, highlight key political concepts, and affirm the authority of Party leadership. This rhetorical strategy, characterized by repetition and syntactic symmetry, aligns with the traditional features of Chinese political language, where emphasis and coherence are often achieved through parallel structures and lexical reiteration. However, due to the significant linguistic and rhetorical differences between Chinese and English, the translation of such tautological expressions requires careful adaptation to preserve both the semantic intent and the persuasive function of the source text.

Through a detailed discourse analysis of the English translation of Volume III, it is evident that three primary translation strategies are systematically employed to render tautological constructions: simplification, substitution, and summarization. Simplification involves distilling the core idea of repetitive source expressions and omitting redundancies that may appear excessive or stylistically inappropriate in English. This strategy enhances clarity and fluency while retaining the conceptual emphasis of the original. Substitution refers to the replacement of repeated terms with synonyms, pronouns, or functionally equivalent structures that conform to the stylistic norms of English. By doing so, the translator preserves the rhetorical force of the original while avoiding monotony and redundancy in the target language. Summarization is used in instances where the original text is lengthy or descriptively dense. This strategy extracts the essential content and conveys it through condensed phrasing, thereby improving readability and ensuring that the translation remains accessible to international audiences.

Despite their specific distinctions, all three strategies reflect a shared functional objective: to reduce surface-level redundancy and restructure information in a manner more consistent with English rhetorical expectations. This translational tendency is rooted in fundamental differences between the two languages. Chinese often employs repetition and parallel constructions to achieve emphasis, cohesion, and emotional resonance, placing greater weight on semantic coherence over explicit logical structuring. Conversely, English favors linear progression, syntactic economy, and logical clarity, typically avoiding lexical repetition unless for deliberate rhetorical effect.

Thus, the translation of tautology in Chinese political discourse necessitates a shift from formal equivalence to functional equivalence, whereby rhetorical intent is preserved through alternative linguistic means. This approach ensures not only the ideological fidelity of the translated text but also its rhetorical effectiveness, readability, and cultural acceptability in global contexts.

IV. CONCLUSION

Tautology, as a rhetorical device that reinforces core concepts through subject-object repetition and syntactic symmetry, plays a vital role in Chinese political discourse. It amplifies both the authority and emotional resonance of political ideology, serving as a powerful tool for emphasis and persuasion. This study has examined the use and translation of tautology in *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* (Volume III), focusing on its definition, typology, rhetorical functions, and translation strategies within the framework of discourse analysis.

By analyzing tautology at the linguistic level, the study sheds light on its distinct rhetorical characteristics and the complexities involved in its cross-linguistic transfer. Considering the structural and expressive differences between Chinese and English, the paper highlights the challenges and strategies of translating tautological constructions in a way that preserves their intended emphasis and ideological significance.

Ultimately, this research aims to contribute theoretical insights and practical guidance for the effective translation and global dissemination of Chinese political discourse, supporting its broader engagement in international political communication.

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