

# A Study on the Translation Strategies of China's International Image Promotional Videos From the Perspective of Cross-Cultural Communication—Take the Japanese Version of “PRC” and “CPC” as an Example

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In 2023, People's Daily New Media released the multilingual versions of China's national image promotional video “PRC” and the international image selection film for the Communist Party of China “CPC”, marking significant milestones in China's international communication and translation efforts. Based on cross-cultural communication theory, the Japanese versions of “PRC” and “CPC” are hereby taken as research objects to reveal the characteristics of China's international image overseas promotion and translation strategies. In terms of discourse, processing methods such as part-of-speech conversion and deletion can be flexibly used. For expressions with distinctive Chinese characteristics and those embodying the ideological core and cultural essence of the source country, the translation strategy of cultural integration can be appropriately adopted. The localization effect of external publicity translation is the result of cross-cultural communication. Translators can give full play to their subjective initiative to maximize the effect of cross-cultural communication.

*Keywords:* cross-cultural communication, China's national image, international image for the Communist Party of China, propaganda documentaries, translation strategies

## Introduction

Amid globalization, enhancing cultural exchanges is crucial for strengthening China's communication capabilities and cultural soft power. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized promoting international communication, innovating publicity methods, and bridging Chinese and global perspectives to effectively tell Chinese stories and amplify China's voice. Overseas promotional videos and their translation play a pivotal role in shaping China's global image and enhancing discourse power. However, external publicity translation often overlooks foreign audiences' psychological needs and language habits, reducing effectiveness (Cao & Wang, 2015). As cross-cultural communication, it requires communicative effectiveness. This article explores strategies to improve translation effectiveness in achieving “communication leading to communication”, offering insights for innovating translation strategies.

### **Research on Cross-Cultural Communication and External Publicity Translation Strategies**

Since the 20th century, two major turns have emerged in the field of translation, namely, the linguistic turn and the cultural turn (Wang & Liu, 2023). American cultural anthropologist Edward T. Hall, in his seminal work on intercultural communication, *The Silent Language*, revealed the significant connections between language, non-verbal cues, and the underlying culture, providing a new perspective for cross-cultural communication. Cross-cultural communication refers to the communication, interaction, information dissemination, and interpersonal activities among different cultures or social members with different cultural backgrounds, as well as the process of the flow, sharing, penetration, and migration of various cultural elements in the global society (Sun, 2008). Cross-cultural communication involves the transmitter, channels, recipients, and the reception effect. With China's rising global prominence, its culture faces new opportunities and challenges. In the information age, effective communication in external publicity requires considering the audience's cultural background and cognitive strategies. Translation strategies significantly affect communication outcomes, yet current research often overlooks their impact on communicative effectiveness and international influence. Common translation strategies include literal translation and free translation, semantic translation and communicative translation, foreignization and domestication, and cultural acculturation. In terms of cultural translation, emphasis has been placed on the cultural translation model of “close to the source language and close to the target language” at the level of language conversion, thereby complementing and extending both approaches (Zhang, 2018). In terms of the principles of external publicity translation, it should be close to the actual development of China, the needs of foreign audiences for Chinese information, and the thinking habits of foreign audiences (Huang, 2004). Considering the localized effect of external publicity, communicators can test the effectiveness of information transmission and sharing through feedback (Wang, 2019). The external publicity translation of national culture requires the comprehensive application of audience strategies, selection strategies, dilution strategies, etc. (Chen, 2017). The government's external publicity strategy should fully recognize its strategic position in the communication of external images, take into account the creative rebellion of the audience, adopt appropriate external publicity translation strategies, and construct translation texts that integrate both Chinese and foreign languages (Zhang & Zheng, 2022). In conclusion, external propaganda discourse should balance the preservation of Chinese characteristics with cross-cultural communication, bridging Chinese and international perspectives. It is crucial to compensate for cultural deficits, clarify semantics, and identify commonalities in language between China and other nations (Zeng, 2018). At present, the focus of translation strategy research is primarily on English external propaganda. The study of external publicity translation strategies of small languages can contribute its diversity and particularity perspectives to the study of external publicity strategies. Based on the theory of cross-cultural communication, this article examines the Japanese translations of the 2023 National Image Network promotional video “PRC” and the Chinese Communist Party's International Image Network film “CPC” to elucidate the translation strategy characteristics for China's international image and external propaganda within the Japanese linguistic framework.

### Discourse Translation Strategies

In order to improve the effect of cross-cultural communication, it is particularly important to fully consider and master the audience's reception strategies for foreign cultural information and its influencing factors. In recent years, China's foreign publicity translation has emphasized the cultural background and information comprehension patterns of the audience, building on the principles of “faithfulness and elegance” in the translation content. This approach has improved the effectiveness of the localization effect of foreign publicity translation. Country and party image propaganda is distinguished by its broad audience, authoritative nature, and international impact within all external propaganda efforts, and it carries the hallmarks of Chinese discourse. In the process of translation for external publicity, the translator, as a medium for secondary “encoding” dissemination of Chinese stories, must prioritize language that appeals to and is accepted by the target readers. It is crucial to strive for reducing disparities related to national systems and religious beliefs to the greatest extent possible (Mou & Wu, 2021). The subjectivity of the audience or the possibility of having preconceived notions, etc., must be fully considered, to ensure that the external publicity translation conforms to the audience's cultural acceptance model and arouses their cultural identity or resonance.

Example 1:

- (1) 这是我，古老，深邃/ (This is me, ancient, profound/)
- (2) 这也是我，年轻，开放/ (This is me too, young and open/)
- (3) 这是我，富饶，进取/ (This is me, rich and enterprising/)
- (4) 这也是我，友善，和平。 (This is me too, friendly and peaceful.)

Translation: これは私です、悠久の歴史のその深邃、これも私です、若く開放的で、これは私です、豊穰と向上心にあふれ、これも私です、友好的で平和を愛しています。 (From: “PRC”)

The translation retains the parallelism and contrast of “This is me/This is me too”, while appropriate supplements are added for complete semantic expressions. The original text utilizes personification alongside adjectives for inanimate entities, such as “ancient, rich, and peaceful”. By incorporating supplementary language and discourse processing techniques, the translation adapts some parts of speech to fit the concept of “anthropomorphic China”, ensuring semantic equivalence to the source language. Chinese, as an ideographic language, enables a single word to possess multiple parts of speech, a key feature of its vocabulary. For instance, in “the publishing of this book”, “publishing” functions as both a verb and a noun. Part-of-speech conversion maximizes equivalence to the original text's meaning. Words like “ancient, rich, and peaceful” are strategically translated; for example, short Sentence (1) adds “歴史” to create a subject relationship with “私”, while in Sentence (3), adjectives are converted to parallel nouns “豊穰と向上心”, complemented by the predicate “...に溢れる”. In Sentence (4), “friendly” retains its adjective form, while “peace” is converted to a noun for the predicate “愛しています”. Through semantic translation and part-of-speech conversion, the translation effectively conveys the original information while minimizing semantic understanding obstacles for the target audience.

Example 2: 这是曾经的我，曾经一穷二白，筚路蓝缕。 (This is the me I used to be. I was once poor and destitute, and the road was full of obstacles.)

Translation: これはかつての私です、困窮し弱り果てていました。 (From: “PRC”)

In the original text, the expression that “一穷二白” (One is poor and two is white) comes from *On Ten Major Relations* by Mao Zedong (1956): I once said that we are “poor” and “white”. “Poor” indicates a lack of industry and underdeveloped agriculture, while “Bai” signifies a blank slate, with low levels of culture and science.

“筚路蓝缕” comes from *Zuo Zhuan—Xuan Gong Twelve Years*: “筚路蓝缕，以启山林” (The blue strands on the road open up the mountains and forests).

“筚路” (The road) refers to the diesel engine, and the “蓝缕” (blue thread) represents the shabby clothes. It means driving a simple diesel truck and wearing tattered clothes to open up roads in the mountains and forests, used to describe the hardships of starting a business. Both idioms belong to a parallel relationship, with the former emphasizing the status more, and the latter placing more emphasis on process. The expression that “一穷二白” (one is poor and two is white) comes from the difficult environment in the early days of the construction of New China, while “筚路蓝缕” comes from historical allusions, describing hard work and entrepreneurship. The common point is that they are all unfamiliar idioms to Japanese readers. As an international image promotional video, it is necessary to fully consider the wide range of audiences, the language culture, and other cognitive characteristics of the audience in the target language country. Efforts should be made to avoid mechanical conversion of text symbols, not to stick to the details of the original text, only use it as a reference, and just condense its core content to make the translation concise and easy to understand (Xiong, 2014). The translation imitates two four-character idioms as “困穷” (poverty) and “弱り果てる” (weak) as two adjectives respectively. “一穷二白” (one is poor and two is white) and “筚路蓝缕” (the road is blue and blue) convey different ideas: The former underscores the transformation from weakness to strength, while the latter highlights the challenging journey of establishing oneself in a field. The original text has a distinctive artistic effect and profound appeal expressed in the local language. The translation conveys the semantic meaning in a straightforward manner, aligning with the goal of effective communication. However, this approach diminishes the emotional impact.

### Cross-Cultural Translation Strategies

The cross-cultural communication process comprises an information transmitter, communication channel, information receiver, interpretation effect, and interference factors. It can be one-way, two-way, or circular. Traditional external publicity often transmits information one-way without feedback, while two-way or circular communication emphasizes feedback and re-transmission based on interpretation. In external publicity translation, the source language represents the information transmitter, and the target language serves as the recipient. Factors such as communication methods, cultural background, and technological channels affect the interpretation and acceptance of information. With advancements in digital media, communication has shifted from traditional linear models to non-linear, multimodal, and interactive hypertext formats (Zhang & Zheng, 2022).

External publicity translation is largely a one-way process where feedback is often delayed or absent. Misunderstanding cultural information by recipients is common, highlighting the need to adapt to the target audience’s ideology, social systems, values, and customs. Translators must exercise subjectivity and empathy to

refine translations from the reader’s perspective, aiming to minimize misunderstandings and achieve effective cross-cultural communication. The goal is to provide accurate and culturally resonant messages to ensure the recipient’s comprehensive understanding and interpretation of the intended meaning.

Example 3: 我愿意同一切进步力量携手前进。(I am willing to join hands with all progressive forces to move forward.)

Translation: 新時代の力と手を携え，世界の人々が共に前進することを願っています。(The strength of the new era is carried by hands, and the people of the world are moving forward together and willing to do so.) (From: “CPC”)

The original text “joining hands with all progressive forces” comes from “General Secretary Xi Jinping’s Important “July 1” Speech in 2021” (Xinhuanet, 2021). The relevant sentence in the context of the speech is: The Chinese believe in “within the four seas” since ancient times. We are all brothers” and pursue “Hello to you, hello to me, hello to everyone”. “Harmony is precious” has become a cultural gene rooted deep in the blood of the Chinese nation.

It aims to show that China is committed to safeguarding international fairness and justice, promoting world peace and stability, and resolutely opposing hegemonism and power politics. The “progress” in “all progressive forces” of “win-win” conveyed in the original text may have different interpretations in the political and cultural contexts of different countries and regions. For example, it was misread as “Everything we agree with is only beneficial to our progress”, turning into situations, such as “self-interest” and “one’s own side”. If only pursuing fidelity to the original text and ignoring the possible “creative rebellion” of the target language audience, major mistakes in external publicity translation will emerge. Therefore, the translation has added translations and explanations. First, in the first half of the sentence, it is explained that “all progressive forces” refer to “新時代の力” (the forces of the new era), while in the second half of the sentence, relevant supplementary explanations are given that “世界の人々が共に前進することを願っています” (the people of the world are moving forward together). Internationality is enhanced to reduce misunderstandings. Translators in languages with Chinese characteristics must have a clear stance, accurate core information, and effective interpretation.

Example 4: 纵使前进一步死，决不后退半步生。(Even if you take one step forward and die, you will never take one step back to live.)

Translation: たとえ死んだとしても，退くことなく、前に進みます。(From: “CPC”)

The original text of Example 4 quotes Qi Fabao, the leader of a heroic regiment guarding the motherland’s borders, using a dual sentence structure with corresponding meanings. While the structure enhances the message’s emotional appeal, translation cannot replicate the original’s word count, rhythm, or symmetry due to linguistic differences between Chinese and Japanese. The original juxtaposes “forward” and “retreat”, “death” and “life”, reflecting perspectives on life, death, and spiritual beliefs. To preserve the core ideological and cultural essence, the translation strategically prioritizes meaning over form. Specifically, it omits translating “生” from the second half of the sentence to address cultural divergences.

Although both Chinese and Japanese views on life and death are influenced by Confucianism, their expressions differ. In China, life is highly valued, and death holds deep social significance. In contrast, Japanese

Bushido emphasizes dying for family and country as a supreme honor, yet these concepts may not evoke the same personal resonance for the Japanese audience. Cultural differences, such as China’s view of life and Japan’s admiration for fleeting beauty (e.g., cherry blossoms) or samurai loyalty, create potential cognitive barriers. The translation adopts a cultural integration strategy, aligning meaning with the target audience while maintaining the original’s cultural balance (Mou & Wu, 2021).

### Conclusions

This article examines the Japanese versions of “PRC” and “CPC” external publicity videos, analyzing international image translation strategies from a cross-cultural communication perspective. The “PRC” video uses concise, accessible language with short sentences or phrases, focusing on objective facts and avoiding complex rhetorical techniques to present a macro image of the nation. In contrast, the “CPC” video employs metaphors and culturally distinctive expressions to depict the party’s image with a more detailed, engaging style, showcasing differences in translation strategies.

For “PRC”, translation requires meticulous attention to individual words and phrases, employing strategies like annotation and illustration to reduce semantic barriers while retaining the core message. The “CPC” translation focuses on minimizing misunderstandings and appropriately adjusting or reinterpreting metaphors to convey cultural connotations effectively when equivalents are unavailable in the target language.

Cross-cultural translation goes beyond domestication and foreignization, involving adaptable strategies that bridge cultural differences. Successful external publicity translations rely on translators’ flexibility and cultural awareness, ensuring semantic clarity and resonance. The innovative strategies for translating “PRC” and “CPC” contribute to cross-cultural communication by addressing cultural gaps and finding common linguistic ground, providing valuable insights for international image promotion.

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