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EDITORIAL

Introduction to the Special Issue: Translation in Political Discourse and Global Narratives

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Abstract:

Translation serves as a potent yet often overlooked force in political discourse, shaping global narratives and mediating information across linguistic and cultural boundaries. This introduction explores the transformative potential of translation as a form of activism and identity construction in political discourse, delving into its ability to challenge prevailing narratives, amplify marginalised voices, and foster a more inclusive and empathetic global dialogue. Drawing on the insights of George Orwell and John Searle regarding the potency of language in political manipulation and power dynamics, the study illuminates the transformative role of translation as a catalyst for change and cross-cultural understanding. It underscores the significance of activist translation, particularly within Chinese contexts, an area that remains relatively underexplored in scholarly discourse. Structured into three sections, this introduction initially traces the historical underpinnings of activist translation within political and religious discourse, outlining translation's transformative power. The second section analyses how translation influences cultural transmission and identity construction on a global scale. The third section portrays activist translation as a driver of inclusivity, amplifying marginalised voices, dismantling systemic inequalities, and advocating for equality worldwide. Looking ahead, the conclusion outlines challenges and future directions in political discourse translation, emphasising the necessity of maintaining ethical portrayals of cultural identities and addressing cross-cultural misunderstandings. The introduction concludes with a list of references, offering key perspectives to inspire further research in the realm of political discourse translation.

Keywords: political discourse, translation, global narratives, activism, Chinese political discourse, identity

1. Introduction

Translation, an often overlooked yet potent force in political discourse, plays a pivotal role in shaping political discourse and global narratives, mediating information flow across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Recent research has brought to light the often overlooked nature of translation in the field of politics; modern scholarship arguably lacks a comprehensive examination of the roles that translators assume in representing and recontextualising political discourse. (Schäffner & Bassnett, 2010; Gu 2019; Liu 2021). Political discourse encompasses various types of texts, including political speeches, treaties, party manifestos, press releases, campaign materials, debates, and other documents that are used to communicate political ideas and goals. In his essay 'Politics and the English Language',

George Orwell (1946) contended that the manipulation of political language, characterised by the use of vague words and phrases, euphemisms and clichés, such as 'freedom', 'democracy', 'collateral damage' and 'progress' has served to sway public perception and sometimes to justify harmful actions, especially for economically motivated wars. These linguistic devices distance the reader from the reality of what is being discussed, making it easier for the public to accept or ignore uncomfortable truths. Orwell further argues that the calculated misuse of language in politics is a deliberate tool used to deceive and manipulate the public, as this particular use of political language makes it difficult for people to think clearly about relevant political issues. A recent example of this is the way the Russian government has imposed the term "special military operation" to define its illegal invasion of Ukraine and concomitant war crimes, punishing any Russian citizen who uses different terminology to describe Russia's belligerent attack on its neighbouring country. John Searle (1969) added a layer to this discourse, challenging us to consider the power of language and translation as a political act. Language, he asserts, is far from neutral; instead, it wields speech acts as a powerful tool that can be used to shape global narratives. Both Orwell and Searle's writings remain highly relevant today, as they serve as a reminder that language (and translation) can have a profound impact on our thinking and our actions; language and translation hold the power to activate change by shaping public opinions, and the global dissemination and reception of political messages. I argue that understanding the importance of political language and activist translation opens the gateway to comprehending its potential to challenge prevailing narratives, amplify marginalised voices and foster a more inclusive and empathetic global dialogue.

The concept of activist translation often extends beyond linguistic conversion; it involves the practice of translating texts, documents, or content with the explicit goal of promoting social, political, and cultural change. It seeks to convey and amplify specific messages that challenge established power dynamics, advocate for human rights, address injustices, or raise awareness about pressing issues. While activist translation has gained considerable scholarly attention in recent years, its exploration within the context of China remains relatively limited (Wang 2022, p 170). In today's digital age, coupled with the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI), the potential impact of translation on political discourse has expanded even further. Technological advancements and the burgeoning landscape of AI-driven machine translation and digital platforms, exemplified by tools like ChatGPT, LLaMa, and Google Bard, offer both opportunities and challenges to translators. In addition to linguistic skills, political discourse translators and interpreters often require comprehensive knowledge of political systems, ideologies, international relations, and current affairs in both source and target languages. Political discourse translators also need the skills to seamlessly adapt the style, tone, and structure to align with the intended audience's cultural, ethical, and linguistic conventions. Technological innovations undeniably facilitate broader accessibility and dissemination of political information; however, they underscore the need for thorough attention to the authenticity and cultural nuances of translated content.

This introduction opens a special issue focused on the multiple challenges inherent in political discourse translation as a form of activism that can herald change and enable cross-cultural understanding. Subdivided into three sections, it discusses several pressing issues in political discourse translation that highlight the power of translation in its transformative potential of activating change

and shaping public perception. The first section considers relationships between definitions of activist translation and political discourse. It also unearths the historical bedrock of activist conceptual frameworks within translation, particularly political and religious discourse. This journey into the past underscores the power of translation in activating change. The intricate task of navigating cultural intricacies converges with the need to portray cultural identities ethically, accompanied by the challenge of circumventing misrepresentation and cross-cultural misunderstandings. The second section investigates how translation influences cultural transmission and identity construction in the global arena. The final section discusses how activist translation emerges as an enabler of inclusivity, an advocate for amplifying marginalised voices and a force that dismantles systemic inequalities and champions equality on a global scale. With an eye on the future, the conclusion outlines possible challenges and future directions in political discourse, followed by a list of references reflecting key perspectives that might stimulate future research on political discourse translation.

2. Political Discourse Translation and Activist Translation

Schäffner and Bassnett (2010) emphasise the amalgamation of politics and translation in driving social, economic, and political change and sculpting global narratives (p13). Translation, a force that often escapes the spotlight yet wields substantial impact in conveying political discourse, assumes a central role in shaping the global narratives that traverse linguistic and cultural confines. So far, this interplay of translation with the spectrum of political activities, spanning from 'inner-state' to 'inter-state discourse' across various forms of communication, is broadly termed political discourse translation (Schäffner 1997, p 119). This concept becomes more potent when viewed through the lens of Tymoczko (2000), who emphasizes the innate selectivity and 'partial nature' that are inescapable facets of the translation process (p 24). This intrinsic partiality inevitably injects translations with a political essence. In this perspective, Tymoczko suggests how the very act of translation unavoidably involves the exercise of choice and bias.

Consequently, this inherent partiality within translations renders them politically significant, influencing how information is presented and understood within various contexts. As a result, Tymoczko (2007) sees translation itself as 'forms of speech acts associated with activism: translations that rouse, inspire, witness, mobilise, and incite to rebellion' (p213). Activist translation is often defined as the translation of politically or socially charged texts and is often oppositional, aiming to produce social transformation. It is a particular form of translation used to support political agendas and struggles at the local and global levels (Tymoczko 2007; 2010; Baker 2013; Carcelén-Estrada 2018; Baldo 2020; Wang 2022). The history of activist translation revolves around the use of translation to promote religious and political change, build solidarity, challenge injustices, and promote peace.

Although the concept of activist translation may appear contemporary, its historical roots can be traced back to the ancient civilisations and the early days of the printing press in the 3rd century. During this epoch, politics and religion were intertwined, prompting translators to engage in the translation of texts that championed social justice and advocated for political and religious reform. A noteworthy example is the renowned Buddhist scholar Kumārajīva (344–413), who translated Buddhist texts from Sanskrit into Chinese, made them accessible to a broader Chinese audience, and thus significantly

developed Chinese Buddhism. Kumārajīva's translation was influential in shaping the philosophies and practices of various Buddhist schools in China and across East Asia (Barrett 2019; Shi 2015). Kumārajīva's translation, in this instance, arguably represents how translation becomes a conduit for societal evolution that elucidates the relationship between translation and the moulding of cultural and religious identities.

In the 16ᵗʰ century, Europe witnessed activist translation through the endeavours of Protestant reformers, such as Martin Luther (1483-1546) and William Tyndale (1494-1536). Their translations of the Bible into English (published in 1526) and German (published in 1534) became symbolic of spreading the ideals of the Protestant Reformation and disseminating the Bible's teachings to a broader audience. Both Tyndale and Luther's translations of the Bible used simplified language to make it more accessible to ordinary people. Their translations also served as reflections of their own theological and political views, emphasising the importance of individual salvation, faith, and the priesthood of all believers.

During the colonial era, translation emerged as a dual-edged instrument wielded both for colonisation and resistance. For example, in the context of French colonialism in Vietnam spanning 1887 to 1954, the French meticulously translated and enforced their legal codes and administrative and educational systems within Vietnam. The imposition of French through translation and other means in Vietnam served as a strategic manoeuvre that bolstered their colonial control. Regrettably, this imposition via translation, among other means, inflicted a profound toll on indigenous languages and cultural heritage. Amid this colonial backdrop, the Viet Minh, a pivotal faction in the multifaceted struggle against French supremacy in Vietnam, embarked on crafting publications that were translated into different languages, including French, to expose the injustices of colonial rule. This fostered a sense of national identity and unity; more importantly, it garnered international support for their goal of independence.

Notable figures like Phan Chu Trinh (1872-1926) and Phan Boi Chau (1867-1940) produced writings and translations that vehemently denounced French colonialism. These publications contributed to the rise of a resolute anti-colonial and nationalist movement that ultimately ushered in Vietnam's independence. These writings and translations resounded with genuine aspirations for national independence and were the linchpin of a more significant endeavour to forge connections with kindred movements globally. Although the translations of Vietnamese anti-colonial writings aiming to foster solidarity across colonised regions encountered obstacles in contrast to their internal distribution, the intellectual exchanges and connections that evolved with global movements were influential in shaping the course of Vietnam's journey towards attaining sovereignty.

In the 19ᵗʰ and 20ᵗʰ centuries, translation continued to play a crucial role in the spread of political ideologies. Scholars who examine the intricate nexus between translation and the wielding of power, ideology, and manipulation in political discourse suggest that translation is a dynamic and strategic activity where linguistic choice holds the power to shape, distort or reveal (Schäffner, 1997, 2004, 2012, 2018; Baumgarten & Cornellà-Detrell, 2018; Valdeón & Calafat, 2020). A growing interest among translation scholars has prompted an examination of how political agents strategically employ translation as a tool of manipulation (Baker 2006; Salama-Carr 2007) and how political translators

entwined with various theoretical frameworks advocate a plethora of causes, ranging from abolitionism, women's rights, and labour rights, anti-colonialism, to environmentalism. These translation scholars have criticised the process of framing political messages to amplify or downplay certain aspects of the original text to evoke desired emotional responses (McLaughlin & Muñoz-Basols, 2016) and to advance specific agendas (Vandaele, 2016; Pomerleau, 2023).

Notable instances abound; for instance, the Japanese government has manipulated translation to downplay and deny the existence of the comfort women system, also known as IANFU (慰安婦), a reprehensible network of forced prostitution established by the Japanese military during World War II, during which women were forced into sexual slavery. The majority of the women were kidnapped or coerced into service from Korea, China, and other parts of Asia and were subjected to extreme physical and emotional abuse (Wang 2020; Myadar and Davidson 2021). Historical records and testimonies from survivors in Japanese have been altered and censored to minimise the scale and severity of the abuses perpetrated against these women. By controlling the narrative through translation, the Japanese government has both concealed the extent of their country's cruelty towards these women and sought to avoid taking responsibility for this grave injustice (Henry 2013).

Baker (2013) maintains that translation is 'an alternative space for political action' that 'constitutes a space of resistance, a means of reversing the symbolic order' (p 23). Activist translators in this context take various forms, including translating the interview scripts of survivors of socio-political injustices into multiple languages and rendering their stories accessible to a wider audience globally. Collaborating closely with activists, human rights organisations, anti-colonists, and feminist communities, translators ensure that the translated content effectively serves its intended purpose, contributing to meaningful change (Seo 2008; Gu 2022). Through such collaborative endeavours, translations resonate with international readerships. Arguably, activist translators have played an important role in compelling the Japanese government to acknowledge the existence of the comfort women system. It was through this continuous effort that in 2021, Japanese Prime Minster Yoshihide Suga finally made an official apology for Japan's aggression in WWII and admitted the military's role in coercing comfort women. This case highlights how translation can be used to create counter narratives that oppose the interests and agenda of a country's political elite. Translating the accounts of comfort women survivors has enabled activist translators to give voice to historically oppressed and silenced women. Consequently, the translations have challenged the dominant narratives in Japan that seek to sanitise the country's war crimes, including many contemporary educational materials.

The advent of globalisation and the digital age has ushered in a transformative era for activist translation; activist translation remains a potent force, continuing to support various causes including human rights, climate justice, and LGBTQ+ rights. Social media, online platforms, and collaborative translation initiatives have amplified the reach of translated content, enabling activists to engage with global audiences instantaneously. The ease of sharing translated materials has facilitated cross-cultural conversation and solidarity among diverse communities. Within this landscape, activist translators assume a key role in translating online content, including blog posts, articles, and social media updates. This dynamic process fosters global conversation and focuses support for a spectrum of causes (Doerr

2021). For example, the well-known organisation *Translators without Borders* (TWB)[1] has provided collaborative translation services with over 100,000 language members volunteering language and translation services to articulate various pressing issues, thereby benefiting humanitarian and development organisations. As stated on their website, by employing translation as a tool of metamorphosis, these activists aim to combat censorship and assist grassroots ideological struggles; in doing so, they showcase the transformative potential of translation in challenging political restrictions.

The theoretical foundations of translation activism are rooted in a multidisciplinary approach within which translators draw on various fields including sociology, cultural studies, and political science. These foundations provide various conceptual frameworks and various types of activist translation, including language and power (Tymoczko and Gentzler 2002), (critical) discourse analysis (Hatim and Mason 1990; Schäffner 2004), cultural theory (Pym 2000), feminist theory (Simon 1996; von Flotow 1997), agency and empowerment (Tymoczko 2000), postcolonial theory (Huggan 2013), ethics of translation (Drugan and Tipton 2017; Chesterman 2018), globalisation and localisation (Wang and Sun 2008; Pym 2004). Thus, it is not surprising to see that various types of activist translation, ranging from activist literature, feminist and gender translation, human rights translation, and environmentalist translation to organised communities translation, draw upon various theoretical frameworks to critique and transform dominant power structures, shedding light on the significance of translation as a tool for promoting social change, challenging dominant narratives, and advancing advocacy efforts. Within Chinese contexts, as summarised by Wang (2022), the majority of studies pertaining to activist translation tend to be confined to discussions of cultural transformation rather than encompassing political and societal change. This trend persists regardless of whether the inquiry is directed towards translation history or contemporary online activism in China (p 172). In their summary of twenty years of research on political discourse, Randour, Perrez & Reuchamps (2020) state that most of the research into translated political discourse conducted so far has been limited to the institutional discourse of political elites. This tendency is particularly pronounced within Chinese contexts, where a significant number of recent studies on political discourse translation uniformly focus on the discourse of key Chinese political figures. A vivid illustration of this trend is the recent call for papers entitled 'Political Discourse Translation in Contemporary Chinese and Western Contexts' in 2022 for *The Translator* journal. Among the over 200 submitted abstracts, a remarkable 61.85 percent of the submissions revolved around the discourse of Chinese political leaders. This inclination may be attributed to the prominent and influential position of these key political leaders in contemporary Chinese politics. The policies, speeches, and political actions of these figures have had a profound impact on various aspects of Chinese society and international relations. As a result, researchers and scholars may perceive their discourse as a noteworthy subject of study, especially within the context of political discourse translation. Potentially, this could reflect broader global interest in understanding China's evolving political landscape and its implications. However, while the roles of these individuals are undoubtedly significant, an exclusive emphasis on their discourse might neglect the diversity of voices and perspectives that shape the political landscape in China. This, in turn, could potentially limit a comprehensive understanding of the broader socio-political dynamics and policy debates occurring

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[1]https://translatorswithoutborders.org/

within the country. Critics might argue that a more balanced exploration of more various political figures and their discourses could provide a richer and more nuanced analysis of the complexities at play in contemporary Chinese politics.

To sum up, spanning ancient civilisations to the modern era and encompassing a diverse array of studies across various countries, including China, activist translation emerges as a pivotal force in influencing political ideologies, nurturing cross-cultural comprehension, and shaping global narratives. The exploration of the historical evolution and socio-political underpinnings of activism affirms that activist translation serves as a mirror to the progression of society, ideologies, and ongoing struggles for justice over time: this distinct nature sets activist translation apart from other forms of translation, underlining its inherent political and collaborative dimensions that drive change and advocacy. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge its vulnerability to ideological biases.

3. Amplifying Marginalised Voices: Shaping Global Narratives

Throughout history, activist translators have consistently championed suppressed or marginalised voices by translating texts into different languages or making them accessible to broader audiences. Theorists like Susan Bassnett and Michael Cronin have emphasised that the economic, political, and social contexts in which translation takes place are inseparable from the methods and techniques of translation itself, including the minutiae of specific word choices. The socio-economic backdrop to the development of Translation Studies in Chinese-speaking regions has been an exponential increase in China's global influence, instantiated from 2013 onwards by the Belt and Road Initiative with its emphasis on creating new markets and trade opportunities. Consequently, there are important synergies to explore between the desire to promote Chinese culture, ideology, and commerce abroad and the forms of language and translation used to facilitate this process (Li and Hope 2021).

From a historical perspective, Ning Wang (2015, 2018) notes that Chinese translators delineated terms for specialised concepts that had evolved in the West: "China had to identify itself with those economically developed and politically powerful countries. In this aspect, translation did play an important role. Due to its overall westernising practice, Chinese culture and ideologies, particularly its political discourse, almost became a marginalised 'colonial' culture" (2015). Conversely, certain concepts elaborated within Chinese political discourse were sometimes misinterpreted by media outlets in the West. Within China and its neighbouring territories, although much research within the humanities and sciences has been developed in the light of Western theories, perspectives, and discoveries, there is an opportunity – and responsibility – for scholars from China and its neighbours to ensure that knowledge exchange is a two-way process by creating appropriately nuanced political terminology, texts, and translations, that can function as socio-political and cultural envoys in the public, academic, and diplomatic spheres.

Xu Mingqiang (2014) highlights the challenge of bridging linguistic and cultural gaps when translating political discourse. He makes an important distinction between translation and mediation, arguing that Chinese political discourse, which communicates effectively with domestic audiences, can lead to confusion or even misunderstanding among foreign audiences if it is translated without mediation. Xu's arguments indicate that the translators of political discourse face a considerable

challenge to bridge linguistic and cultural differences and also the cultural and ideological differences across languages and cultures, especially at a time when communication between China and the rest of the world has been affected by momentous events such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

The concept of activist translation, encompassing a variety of different practices in history, is an effective instrument for effecting social change or challenging injustice. Within this framework, political discourse translation in activism involves translating texts that convey activist and political messages or translating in a manner that challenges dominant power structures and amplifies marginalized voices (Baldo 2020). Activist translation helps amplify the voices of marginalised communities by making their stories, struggles, and perspectives accessible to a broader audience. This can lead to a greater appreciation of cultural diversity and the recognition of shared human experiences. Arguably, in this context, the five articles in this special issue exemplify the process of amplifying marginalized Chinese voices.

'Online Translation-as-Activism against Censorship: The Case of Translating The Whistle Giver' by **Ye Tian** (2023), spotlighted in this special issue, is a case study within this realm. Tian recounts a translation campaign surrounding censored articles addressing COVID-19 in the context of China. Notably, non-professional translators adroitly transformed original texts into diverse readable formats. This manoeuvre was orchestrated to challenge the prevailing authority of official discourse and assert individual agency in formulating public narratives. Tian's study indicates that activist translation can be a powerful tool to make a difference in the world. It is a way to give voice to the voiceless, to challenge injustice, and to increase transparency and accountability. Consequently, this inherent partiality within translations is what renders them politically significant, as it influences how information is presented and understood within various contexts. Ye Tian's study emphasizes that translation holds a powerful and nuanced role in the realm of politics and discourse. The findings highlight the potential of Web 2.0-enabled translation to combat censorship, support grassroots ideological struggles, and provide alternative, subtler forms of resistance to avoid confrontation and immediate censorship.

In his various publications, Michael Cronin (2017; 2018; 2019; 2021) calls for collective efforts to achieve the interconnected goals of safeguarding the environment, promoting fairness across present and future generations, and fostering economic advancement. (Cronin, 2018) Translation has increasingly focused on sustainable development, climate change, and environmental protection, all of which have become global concerns. Translating key texts, speeches, and documents related to these issues ensures that different cultures can engage with increasingly urgent environmental issues ranging from the deforestation of the Amazon to the impact of climate change in countries such as Somalia and Chad. Effective translation of more mainstream media examinations of environmental issues is equally important in terms of sensitizing international audiences. For example, the BBC television programmes 'Green Planet' and 'Planet Earth' have been translated and dubbed into different languages, including Chinese, thereby helping to spread awareness about climate change, biodiversity, and environmental stewardship to global audiences (forthcoming Wang & Li).

Yuan Ping's (2023) study recontextualises Chinese political discourses on climate change in the mass media through translation. It focuses on President Xi's discourses and how they are translated and

represented in the Chinese, British, and American media. Ping examines translated quotations from Xi's speeches using political discourse analysis and the narrative theory concept of quoting (direct, indirect, and mixed quotations). Manual coding is used to analyse the quotations, considering socio-political contexts and journalistic conventions. The findings reveal narrative shifts between institutional and news translation, influenced by factors such as socio-political contexts and journalistic practices. The study provides valuable insights into cross-cultural communication and the role of translation in shaping public opinion on critical global issues like climate change. These insights shed light on the transformative nature of translation in activism and its role in shaping public opinion on significant global issues like climate change.

These studies collectively highlight translation's transformative potential and its role in shaping public discourse on critical global concerns. In conclusion, the exploration of activist translation reveals its impact on shaping global narratives and amplifying marginalised voices both in China and globally. From historical contexts to modern technological advancements, activist translators have played a vital role in challenging power dynamics, advocating for social change, and enhancing cross-cultural understanding. The case studies included in this special, including the translation campaign for 'The Whistle Giver' and the recontextualisation of Chinese political discourses on climate change, exemplify the transformative potential of translation. These case studies affirm that translation can function as a potent catalyst for intercultural comprehension, acting as a conduit that makes information, narratives, and perspectives accessible to diverse audiences. At its core, this transformative practice often works with texts, using linguistic devices that encapsulate the essence of cultural, political and social movements and acting as a catalyst for positive change. By translating these texts, these translators facilitate the spread of ideas across linguistic and cultural divides, fostering understanding and empathy among disparate groups. In Chinese political contexts, translation is therefore a vehicle to promote social change, enhance socio-cultural understanding, and a means of engaging in political activism on a global stage (Tymoczko 2000; Gould and Tahmasebian 2020; Wang 2022; Baldo 2020).

4. Translation in Constructing Cultural Identity

Beyond its capacity to stimulate change, translation also raises questions about the representation of cultural identities on the global stage. How language choices shape perceptions of nations and communities, and the influence of translation in constructing cultural identity and preserving its cultural heritage, emerge as key themes that go beyond translation's role as a tool for communication. Translation in this context becomes an act of advocacy, a force for change, and a vessel for cultural representation. This transformative facet of translation is also encapsulated within the 'activist translation' concept, as it allows individuals to engage with diverse cultural perspectives, promote intercultural dialogue, consolidate a sense of belonging to their own cultural heritage, and construct their own cultural identities (Baker 2013; Cronin 2006, 2018; Baldo 2020).

Cultural identity is a dual concept encompassing both individual distinctiveness and the collective attributes of a group with shared values, beliefs, customs, behaviours, and artefacts. This identity, diverse and multifaceted, is in a state of constant negotiation. As political translators navigate cultural nuances to avoid misrepresentation and cross-cultural misunderstandings, an ethical portrayal of

cultural values and identities assumes considerable importance. Translation's role in constructing cultural identities is particularly pronounced in activist contexts (Camps, 2018; Gagnon & Lehoux-Jobin, 2020; Ghazizadeh & Mollanazar, 2022). When translating texts that convey the struggles, aspirations, and narratives of marginalised or oppressed communities, the translator becomes a gatekeeper of cultural identity. The translator's linguistic choices impact how these communities are perceived globally. By skillfully translating these narratives, activists can challenge stereotypes, rectify misrepresentations, and present a more accurate portrayal of their cultural identities. In the context of Chinese political discourse, many activist translations navigate cultural differences to ensure that their voice is heard globally and that their translations are an instrument for social change.

Baldo (2020) discusses the Italian translation of Judith Butler's *Notes Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015), highlighting that Federico Zappino's translation adeptly navigated contemporary Italian cultural nuances. This ensures that the intricate intersection of performativity, solidarity, and alliances is effectively communicated to Italian readerships. The translation process is not only instrumental in creating discourse but can also facilitate the establishment of activist gender-related networks. This consideration of power differentials among oppressed groups and countries, often linked to cultural identities, is crucial. Cultural identity thus becomes relevant when examining the diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences of oppressed groups and how these intersect with their capacity to forge alliances and participate in activist translation.

Tan and Xiong's (2023) article on 'Constructing Chinese Cultural Identity Internationally in Translated Political Discourse' in this special issue is a case in point, in terms of constructing cultural identity from a Chinese perspective. Tan & Xiong explore the cultural aspect of political discourse and its role in cultural transmission and identity construction. The article focuses on President Xi's international addresses, which incorporate Chinese culture to construct an identity of a peace-loving country that is seeking harmonious co-existence with other nations. Through an analysis of 145 English translations of Xi's international speeches from 2013 to 2022, the study employs corpus analysis techniques to dissect the process of constructing Chinese cultural identity within translated political discourse. Through the examination of high-frequency content words, the utilisation of the first-person plural pronoun "we", LDA topic modelling, and sentiment analysis, Tan and Xiong identify the portrayal of a Chinese cultural identity rooted in a commitment to peaceful ideals; they underscore the role of political discourse as a conduit for shaping cultural identity.

Translation's significance also extends to the realm of diplomacy and international relations. As diplomats and leaders engage in dialogue across linguistic borders, accurate and culturally sensitive translation becomes indispensable for building trust and mutual understanding. Misinterpretations and mistranslations in political contexts can lead to diplomatic misunderstandings and strained relations, and this emphasizes the need for skilled translators who can navigate the intricacies of political language with finesse and accuracy (Capan, Reis and Grasten 2021). In this context, **Gao and Shen** (2023) use a corpus-driven approach to explore public perceptions of diplomatic interpreters in the China-US High-Level Strategic Dialogue. Through an analysis of 4,278 Weibo (a Chinese microblogging platform) entries, their study uncovers that the advent of new media platforms broadens the reach of interpreting events and fosters an innovative mode of interaction. The public evaluates the quality of interpreting based on their native language, relying on formal criteria such as fluency and

pronunciation. Their research illustrates how the translation of diplomatic interactions shapes public perceptions of professionalism while also reflecting the individual identities and values of the bloggers involved.

In the context of diaspora or multiculturalism, translation plays a crucial role in navigating the hybrid cultural identities of both translators and their audiences. According to Tan and Shao (2007), translators possess the capacity to both "construct and deconstruct" national cultural identities (p. 197). The choices made by translators regarding cultural adaptation can significantly impact the cohesiveness and visibility of these hybrid identities. A case in point is the article titled "Tapping into the present political translation and editing in China: problems and pathways as reported by multi-players" by **Junchao Wang** (2023) in this special issue. By employing retrospective think-aloud methods, Wang examines diverse participants engaged in the Chinese National Political Discourse Translation projects, particularly the translation and editing of "Xi Jinping: The Governance of China." Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative data mining techniques, the study uncovers the varying translation perspectives of different stakeholders, revealing distinct roles influenced by their backgrounds and identities. The translator-in-chief emphasizes communicative impact and ideology, advocating for a "Chinese-primary Foreign Expert-secondary Cooperation" approach. On the other hand, foreign experts concentrate on cultural nuances and presenting Chinese doctrines through narratives, proposing the "Double-track Communication" pathway. Editors, serving as gatekeepers, prioritise linguistic precision and adherence to punctuation formats, guided by the "Three-editing & Three-proofreading" principle. Wang's comprehensive data analysis reveals the prevailing power dynamics in translation, underscoring the necessity to address them in political translation projects and thus highlighting the need to appreciate the identity and value system of individual translators. In essence, Wang's study serves as a reminder that successful political translation goes beyond linguistic accuracy. It involves navigating complex power dynamics, respecting individual identities, and ensuring that the translated content resonates authentically with its target audience.

In conclusion, the study of translation in the construction of cultural identity sheds light on the intricate relationship between translation, cultural dynamics, and activism. Within the context of diaspora and multiculturalism, Chinese translators' examples above play an important role in mediating and negotiating hybrid cultural identities for themselves and their global audience. One of the key themes that emerges is the vital role of cultural identity construction in political translation. As the Chinese translators convey the nuances of language and culture, they shape how a nation or community is perceived, enhancing cross-cultural understanding and mutual respect. By promoting cultural exchange and engaging with diverse voices, translation as activism is integral in bridging divides and promoting empathy among nations.

5. Conclusion

In this introduction, the transformative capacity of translation within political discourse is probed as a catalyst for both change and cross-cultural comprehension. It places a particular emphasis on the theme of activist translation within China's intricate landscape, a relatively underrepresented topic in academic discourse. Drawing on Orwell's insights regarding political language manipulation and

Searle's analysis of language's political power, the introduction emphasises the impact of language and translation on shaping public opinion and triggering change. The introduction suggests that beyond mere linguistic conversion, translation in Chinese contexts serves as a powerful agent for promoting social, political, and cultural transformation. These practices emerge as forces of change within political discourse, not only reshaping narratives and establishing viewpoints but also fostering a more inclusive global dialogue. However, the multifaceted realm of activist translation within the context of Chinese political discourse confronts an array of complexities that warrant careful consideration, particularly within the contemporary digital milieu.

The rise of AI and machine-assisted translation in the Chinese political discourse sphere presents an inviting opportunity for expediting the translation process, thus potentially enhancing the pace of societal change. The vast online populace of China serves as an ideal platform for disseminating information and galvanising support. Activist translators, as suggested by Tian in this special issue, operating within the realm of political discourse, are adept at tailoring messages for the online arena, strategically utilising content formats such as memes, allegorical expressions, infographics, and succinct videos to disseminate awareness and engage a broader audience. This strategic approach enables them to traverse the delicate terrain of censorship, employing linguistic ingenuity that conveys critical messages while circumventing overt suppression. As reviewed by Wang and Tan and Xiong and Ping in this special issue, translation in China frequently employs historical analogies and cultural references to subtly challenge established narratives. By invoking shared historical experiences or classic literary works, Chinese translators have conveyed powerful messages that resonate deeply with audiences while avoiding direct confrontation with censorship mechanisms.

China has 56 distinct ethnic groups and 292 living languages. The diversity of languages and ethnicities within China presents another avenue for activist translation. The translation of content into minority languages emerges as a potent strategy for promoting inclusivity and empowering marginalised communities to engage with socio-political activism within the framework of their native languages. This approach not only enhances cross-cultural comprehension but also magnifies the voices of those often marginalised in mainstream discourse. Importantly, activist translation within China is not confined by geographical boundaries. Chinese activists who translate in the area of political discourse can work collaboratively to develop a shared sense of solidarity while simultaneously highlighting universal themes of justice, equality, and freedom that transcend geographical confines.

In conclusion, the realm of political discourse translation within Chinese contexts represents the convergence of translation activism and political engagement. Through innovative linguistic strategies, digital platforms, a commitment to cross-cultural inclusivity, and a resonance with historical underpinnings, Chinese activist translators endeavour to stimulate international conversations and transformative change. This form of translation transcends the mere conversion of words; it triggers cognitive engagement and catalyses metamorphosis within the intricate societal tapestry of China.

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