

# On the Handling of Repetition in the English Version of Xi Jinping: The Governance of China Vol.2

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## Abstract

**The books, Xi Jinping: The Governance of China Vol. 1, 2 & 3, have been well received ever since their publication. From the perspective of rhetoric, numerous rhetorical devices, including repetition, are used in the Chinese version of the books. As a figure of speech, repetition can be used for such purposes as emphasis and rhythm, etc. With the analysis of eight examples from the English version of Xi Jinping: The Governance of China Vol. 2, this paper discusses how the translators deal with the phenomenon of repetition and what effects are achieved. Through the analysis, readers can fully feel the deliberation and the weighing of words of the translators.**

## Keywords

**Repetition; Rhetorical device; Emphasis; Rhythm; Brevity.**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As an authoritative work that fully and systematically reflects Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, the third volume of Xi Jinping: The Governance of China has just been published by the Foreign Languages Press in both Chinese and English, and it is now available at home and abroad. The three volumes have altogether collected 270 articles, including speeches, conversations, instructions and letters of Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee.

The books have been well received both domestically and internationally since they were published. Stylistically speaking, a variety of rhetorical devices are employed in the original texts of the three volumes. Hence, in their English versions, different approaches are taken to handle these rhetorical devices. This paper focuses on the analysis of the use of repetition in both Chinese and English versions of the book Xi Jinping: The Governance of China Vol.2.

## 2. HANDLING OF REPETITION IN THE ENGLISH VERSION OF XI JINPING: THE GOVERNANCE OF CHINA VOL.2

In this part, we shall discuss in detail how the phenomenon of repetition is dealt with and what effects are achieved by means of analyzing eight examples, which are taken from the English version of Xi Jinping: The Governance of China Vol. 2.

According to the rhetorical purposes, the handling of repetition in the English version of the book can be roughly put into two categories.

### 2.1. For Brevity and Avoidance of Redundancy

As a rhetorical device, repetition is used both in Chinese and English, but the rhetorical functions are different in the two languages, and so is the frequency of their use. In English,

people more often use substitution and ellipsis instead of repetition. It is the same case with the handling of some of the repetition in the English version of Xi Jinping: The Governance of China Vol. 2.

#### Example 1:

Chinese version: Wěi dà de shí dài zào jiù wěi dà de rén wù. Dèng Xiǎopíng tóng zhì jiù shì cóng zhōng guó rén mín hé zhōng huá mín zú jìn dài yǐ lái wěi dà dòu zhēng zhōng chǎn shēng de wěi rén, shì wǒ men zhōng xīn rē ài de wěi rén. [1]3

English version: Great times make great people. Deng Xiaoping was a great and beloved man who arose from the historic struggles of the Chinese nation. [2]3

In this example, the Chinese adjective “wěi dà de” (literally meaning “great, mighty”) is used three times and the Chinese noun “wěi rén” (literally meaning “a great man; a great personage”) is used twice. As we all know, in English, there are similar sayings like “Great times create great people” and “Great times make great people”, where the word “great” is repeated once. Hence, the rendering of “Wěi dà de shí dài zào jiù wěi dà de rén wù” into “Great times make great people” sounds very colloquial and idiomatic to English readers and the original Chinese meaning is well-conveyed as well. But, for the second “wěi dà”, the translators do not simply use the word “great” again. Instead, they have chosen an adjective “historic”, which is the exact implied meaning of the original version, because the “historic” means “important in history; likely to be thought of as important at some time in the future”. Hence, “wěi dà dòu zhēng” just means “struggles of historic importance”. However, as for the handling of “wěi rén”, to avoid redundancy, the English version does not mechanically repeat the phrase “great man”, but uses one compound sentence to do the translation. The phrase “wěi rén” is used as an antecedent followed by an attributive clause. From the English version, we readers can feel the deliberation and the weighing of words of the translators.

#### Example 2

Chinese version: Tā fǎn fù qiáng diào, yào bǎ rén mín yōng hù bú yōng hù, zàn chéng bú zàn chéng, gāo xìng bú gāo xìng, dá yīng bú dá yīng zuò wéi zhì dìng fāng zhēn zhèng cè hé zuò chū jué duàn de chū fā diǎn hé guī sù. [1]5-6

English version: Deng repeatedly stressed that it is of paramount importance to take the support, approval, satisfaction, and consent of the people as the prime purpose and ultimate goal of all policies and decisions. [2]5

The Chinese structure “... bú ...” (literally meaning “whether...or not”) occurs four times in the original text. For word-for-word translation, we may render “rén mín yōng hù bú yōng hù, zàn chéng bú zàn chéng, gāo xìng bú gāo xìng, dá yīng bú dá yīng” into the following: “whether people support or not, whether people approve or not, whether people satisfy or not and whether people consent or not”. But, the actual English version uses four English nouns “support”, “approval”, “satisfaction” and “consent” to fully and exactly convey the original meaning. At the same time, such a version also makes the English brief and succinct. However, when we read the English and the Chinese, we are sure to find that the rhythm of the original Chinese is somehow lost. After all, nine English words are employed to express the meaning of the original 22 Chinese characters.

#### Example 3

Chinese version: Tā shì yī wèi gāo zhān yuǎn zhǔ de sī xiǎng jiā, zhèng zhì jiā, zhàn luè jiā, yě shì yī wèi qiú shí, wù shí, tà shí de shí gàn jiā. [1]6

English version: His life’s work shows that he was a farsighted thinker, statesman, and strategist as well as a pragmatic doer. [2]6

Here in this example, the Chinese character “jiā” is used as a suffix and occurs four times. From the perspective of phonetics, the original Chinese sentence reads very rhythmical with the

four and same suffixes in one sentence. However, the English version loses the aesthetic effect though three different English suffixes, namely, -er, -man, and -ist can forcefully and completely express the original meaning. This is one of the regrets of translators and translation. Likewise, three Chinese adjectives “qiú shí”, “wù shí” and “tā shí” are well rhymed and forceful, but the English version uses just one adjective “pragmatic” for it, which is a reasonable and economical practice, and makes the sentence sound succinct and brief, too.

#### Example 4

Chinese version: ...tā tā shí shí bǎ dǎng de jī běn lǐ lùn, jī běn lù xiàn, jī běn gāng líng, jī běn jīng yàn, jī běn yào qiú guǎn ché luò shí hǎo. [1]7

English version: ...and fully implement the Party's basic theories, guidelines, principles, experience and requirements through solid work. [2]7

In the original Chinese text, “jī běn” (literally meaning “basic; fundamental”) is used five times to respectively modify five nouns. In the English version, “basic” is used only once and put in front of “theories”, “guidelines”, “principles”, “experience” and “requirements” to modify them. This treatment makes the English more brief and succinct on the one hand, and faithfully conveys the original meaning on the other.

#### Example 5

Chinese version: Wǒ men de guó quán, wǒ men de guó gé, wǒ men de mín zú zì zūn xīn, wǒ men de mín zú dú lì, guān jiàn shì dào lù, lǐ lùn, zhì dù de dú lì. [1]12

English version: Independence in our development path, theory and system is key to our national sovereignty, independence, and dignity. [2]13

The Chinese possessive case “wǒ men de” (literally meaning “our”) is used four times. The translators use “our” two times to respectively modify “path, theory, system” and “national sovereignty, independence, and dignity”. This translation avoids the mechanical and redundant repetition of the word “our” and is enough to convey the original meaning.

#### Example 6

Chinese version: Zhuó lì péi yǎng yǒu líng hún, yǒu běn shì, yǒu xuè xìng, yǒu pǐn dé de xīn yī dài gé mìng jun1 rén, duàn zào jù yǒu tiě yī bān xìn yang, tiě yī bān xìn niàn, tiě yī bān jì lǜ, tiě yī bān dān dāng de guò yìng bù duì. [1]55

English version: We must cultivate a new generation of revolutionary soldiers who have belief, competence, mettle, and character; and forge a highly competent military with iron-clad beliefs, convictions, and discipline as well as an unbreakable sense of duty. [2]58

In the Chinese text, the verb “yǒu” (literally meaning “have; possess”) is used four times, each followed by a two-character word as the object. The adjective “tiě yī bān” (literally meaning “like iron”) is also used four times, each modifying a two-character word. In this way, the Chinese text reads very rhythmical and forceful. To avoid redundancy, the English translators did not use the verb “have” four times, or the compound adjective “iron-clad” four times, either. As for the rhythm, the two sequences of four nouns can also produce a sense of rhythm.

## 2.2. For the Purpose of Emphasis and Stress

The repetition of words or morphemes for rhetorical effect is an old and common practice in almost all languages. The chief purposes of using repetition are emphasis, heightening of mood, tension or atmosphere, coherence and aesthetic effect. [3]116 In both Chinese and English, repetition can be used for the purpose of emphasis and stress.

#### Example 7

Chinese version: Zhī yǒu mín zú de cái shì shì jiè de, zhī yǒu yǐn lǐng shí dài cái néng zǒu xiàng shì jiè. yào lì zú shí dài tè diǎn, tuī jìn mǎ kè sī zhǔ yì shí dài huà, gèng hǎo yùn yòng mǎ kè sī zhǔ

yì guān chá shí dài, jiě dú shí dài, yǐn lǐng shí dài, zhēn zhèng gǎo dòng miàn lín de shí dài kè tí, shēn kè bǎ wò shì jiè lì shǐ de mài luò hé zǒu xiàng. [1]66

English version: Any philosophy which is successful in one country is of significance to the world. It must should the way to the world. It must should the way to the people in modern times. We should upgrade Marxism on the basis of the realities of modern times. We should use Marxism to better observe, interpret, and lead the times, make clear our current mission, and know the course of history and the direction for the future. [2]69

In the Chinese text, “shí dài” (literally meaning “the times”) is used seven times. However, the English translators did not mechanically put each of them into “the times”. In the English version, “modern times” is used twice, and “the times” once, which is enough to achieve the effect of repetition for stress. In addition, the adding of the word “modern” before “times” skillfully and sufficiently conveys the meaning between the lines.

#### Example 8

Chinese version: Jiān chí bú wàng chū xīn, jì xù qián jìn, jiù yào jiān xìn dǎng de gēn jī zài rén mín, dǎng de lì liàng zài rén mín, jiān chí yī qiē wéi le rén mín, yī qiē yī kào rén mín, chōng fèn fā huī guǎng dà rén mín qún zhòng jī jí xìng, zhǔ dòng xìng, chuàng zào xìng, bú duàn bǎ wéi rén mín zào fú shì yè tuī xiàng qián jìn. [1]40

English version: Let us stay true to our original aspiration and continue marching forward. We need to believe that the Party is rooted in the people, and that the power of the Party comes from the people. We should insist that everything is for the people, rely on the people, give full play to the people’s enthusiasm, initiative and creativity, and push forward the cause of benefitting the people. [2]40

In President Xi’s speech at the ceremony marking the 95th anniversary of the founding of the CPC, “rén mín” (literally meaning “the people”) occurs 107 times. In this example taken from the speech, “rén mín” is used six times. In the English version, “the people” is used six times as well. Likewise, on December 15, 2012, in his speech at the press conference by members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the 18th CPC Central Committee, President Xi Jinping used “rén mín” 18 times, and in the corresponding English version of the speech, “the people” is used 19 times, too.

Such translation is for the purpose of emphasis and stress. As is stated in the CPC Constitution and known to all, the fundamental purpose the Communist Party of China is to wholeheartedly serve the Chinese people. Hence, “the people” must be repeatedly used in order to precisely and forcefully convey the original message. By doing so, the position of the people in President Xi’s mind is clearly expressed. For sure, any omission or substitution would enormously reduce the force and rhythm of the original text.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Language has a magical power that can defeat even millions of troops. Chinese President Xi Jinping’s speeches express wisdom in simple language that packs a powerful, piercing punch.[4] To fully and faithfully convey the original ideas and meanings, English translators have done their utmost and racked their brains to express them in readable, memorable and matter-of-fact language. But, in English, too much repetition may be taken as redundancy. So, due to the differences between Chinese and English languages, some of the subtleties in the original text can only be sacrificed. Repetition, as a rhetorical device, is used when necessary whereas the readability and idiomaticness of the English version must be ensured.

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