

Research Article

Translating China's European Union Policy Papers: An Examination of Evolving Strategies, Purposes, and Power Dynamics (2003-2018)

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Abstract

As China ascends to global prominence, there is an increasing demand for academic analysis of how it translates its political discourse for international audiences, aiming to ensure its policies and perspectives are understood globally. Within this broad context, exploring the translation strategies China employs in its interactions with foreign entities, particularly the European Union (EU), provides a fascinating perspective on how China leverages translation as a mechanism of soft power to enhance its diplomatic communications. The EU, with its considerable economic and political clout, stands as a pivotal partner for China, making their bilateral interactions an essential field of study. Over the last two decades, the relationship between China and the EU has fluctuated across economic, diplomatic, and other dimensions. This dynamic provides a compelling case for dissecting how China has adapted its translation strategies and purposes in communication with the EU. Recent studies on Chinese political discourse (CPD) translation have explored the interplay of discursive features, ideology, and purposes. Studies within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) frameworks often emphasize ideology as manifested in specific discursive features, while neglecting critical dimensions such as power dynamics, discourse types, and situational contexts. Studies on CPD translation purposes and strategies lack longitudinal analyses and have predominantly centered on China's domestic affairs, overlooking China's policy papers addressing foreign countries. This study analyzes the evolution of translation strategies and purposes in China's EU policy papers, namely those from 2003, 2014, and 2018. Using Fairclough's CDA, it examines both the Chinese and English versions, considering the impact of shifting power dynamics, situational contexts, and discourse types. The analysis reveals that the 2014 paper utilized strategies of ideological filtering, priority balancing, and consensus negotiation, while the 2003 and 2018 papers employed literal strategies. This longitudinal study indicates that the translation purpose has shifted from facilitating negotiations to projecting self-representation. This transformation reflects the increasing economic interdependence between China and the EU, which has enhanced China's political influence within the EU and altered the power balance in its favor, leading to a more confident articulation of its views on Sino-EU relations.

Keywords

Chinese Political Discourse, China's Eu Policy Papers, Critical Discourse Analysis, Translation Strategies, Translation Purpose, Power Dynamics

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1. Introduction

Translation and interpreting play pivotal roles in shaping international politics, as politicians frequently need to explain and justify their decisions to a global audience. Recent empirical studies on translated political discourse have delved into the phenomena of translational shifts, examining how meanings are altered or nuanced in the process of translation. Furthermore, these studies have explored the strategic positioning of translators and interpreters in conflict situations, highlighting their influence on diplomatic interactions and the potential for translators to act as cultural mediators or even agents of change [1-4].

Recent scholarly investigations into the translation of Chinese political discourse (CPD) have primarily focused on the interrelationships among specific discursive features, their ideological implications, and the broader purpose of CPD [5-12]. For example, Ward investigates the translation tendencies in *中国共产党简史* (The Communist Party of China: A Concise History, 2021) [11], a text notably translated outside the institutional framework of the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau (CCTB). Despite this departure from institutional translation processes, Ward's analysis reveals no significant ideological divergences from the source text or attempts at stylistic enhancement. The research proposes that the translation's *skopos* primarily emphasizes deliberate marking and self-view portrayal, which Ward contends is essential for facilitating authentic dialogue between China and English-speaking countries.

In addition to *skopos* theory [13], critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a key theoretical framework employed in the study of translating CPD. Gu and Tipton examine China's premiers' annual press conferences as interpreter-mediated events that enable the Chinese government to present its official discourse to both domestic and international audiences. Utilizing a corpus-based approach informed by CDA [9], the study analyzes the use of self-referential terms by government-affiliated interpreters. Findings reveal that interpreters frequently employ self-referential language (e.g., we, our, government) at the expense of the premier's personal voice, thereby reinforcing their institutional identity and contributing to the government's legitimacy through collective intentionality. Moreover, Wu examines the use and translation of fight metaphors in CPD, specifically analyzing governmental and Communist Party reports from 2004 to 2020 [12]. Utilizing a critical cognitive-linguistic approach, the study reveals that fight metaphors in the original Chinese texts serve to legitimize Beijing's domestic authority and reinforce patriotic ideology. In contrast, the translated English versions reframe these metaphors into non-aggressive language tailored for international audiences, with the goal of justifying China's political system and enhancing its global image.

Research on CPD translation within the framework of CDA typically highlights the role of ideology as manifested in specific discursive features. However, critical dimensions

such as power dynamics, discourse types, and situational and institutional contexts are often neglected in the current empirical studies. This oversight persists despite calls from political translation research, particularly by Tymoczko, Gentzler and Schäffner [14, 15], for a more comprehensive approach that includes these factors.

Furthermore, existing research on CPD translation has predominantly centered on content related to China's domestic affairs, with a particular focus on the representation of the central government and Chinese leadership [6, 8-12]. Scholars have generally conceptualized the translation purpose of such discourse as introducing China to an international audience or constructing a national image. This prompts the question of whether these purposes also apply to translating China's policy discourse directed at foreign countries. Given the involvement of multiple parties and the distinct nature of the content in these policy papers—characterized by greater negotiation and cooperation—there may be additional purposes at play. This inquiry is a central focus of the present study. One approach to reifying the potential purposes is to examine the specific translation strategies employed in the process.

Descriptive-explanatory studies on CPD translation have identified various strategies, including the adaptation of ideology-laden and culture-specific terms to enhance comprehension for international audiences, and the use of rhetorical devices to create a more conversational, reader-friendly style [5, 16, 17]. However, a significant gap in the current literature is the absence of longitudinal analyses examining the evolution of translation strategies over specific time frames. This oversight is particularly noteworthy, as understanding the temporal development of translation strategies could provide valuable insights into the changing purposes of CPD translation, an aspect that has been largely unexplored in existing research.

Based on the Chinese and English versions of China's official policy papers on the European Union from 2003 to 2018, this study will investigate the temporal evolution of translation strategies and the underlying purposes, considering the influence of shifting power dynamics, situational contexts, and relevant discourse types during this timeframe. The linguistic data for analysis will encompass all EU policy papers published by China up to the present, specifically those from the years 2003, 2014, and 2018. The Chinese versions of these policy papers are exclusively available on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' domestic website, while the English versions can be accessed on the website of China's diplomatic mission to the EU.

This study will be conducted in three interconnected phases. The initial phase will employ Fairclough's (1989/1995) three-dimensional CDA framework to comparatively examine the discursive features present in the Chinese and English versions of the policy papers from 2003, 2014, and 2018 [14]. This analysis aims to identify the specific translation strate-

gies utilized in the English translations of these policy papers. The second phase will build upon these findings to examine the evolution of translation strategies over the specified time period. The third phase will conceptualize the transformation of the underlying purposes driving the translation of these policy papers. This conceptualization will take into account the shifting power dynamics, situational contexts, and relevant discourse types that may have influenced the changing translation purposes during this timeframe.

2. Research Questions, Theory and Methodology

2.1. Research Questions

The overarching objective of this study is to explore the temporal development of both translation strategies and purposes in the English translations of China's EU policy papers, spanning the 2003 to 2018 period. To this end, the research will seek to address the following questions:

- a. What are the translation strategies employed in the English translations of China's EU policy papers published between 2003 and 2018?
- b. How have the approaches to translation and the underlying purposes evolved over this period, as evidenced by the identified translation strategies?
- c. To what extent do the observed evolutions in translation strategies and purposes correspond to shifts in China's economic and political power dynamics with the EU during the studied period?

2.2. Theoretical Framework

Fairclough's three dimensional framework (1989/1995) serves as the theoretical foundation for this research. According to him, language, denoted by the term discourse, is viewed as a form of social practice. The emphasis is placed on the interplay between discourse and social structures, i.e. how specific ideologies and power relations are naturalized in discourse. To illustrate, powerful participants can exert control over the contributions of less powerful participants by imposing constraints on the content (e.g. or more broadly the knowledge and beliefs in specific institutions or society), relations (e.g. or social relationships) and subjects (e.g. social identities) in discourse. On the other hand, discursive common sense, i.e. the dictionary meaning of linguistic expressions, interactional routines, or the self-evidentness of subjects and situations in discursive practices, reflects the naturalized ideologies, which seem to dissociate from specific interests but in fact perpetuate the existing unequal power relations. All in all, this framework aims at revealing the concealed power relations and naturalized ideologies in or behind discourse [18].

2.3. Methodology

According to Fairclough, the procedure for conducting data analysis can be summarized as follows. The first step is to describe the formal linguistic features in discourse. It is noteworthy that despite the presumption of the mechanical description of formal properties, analysts' subjectivity and bias inevitably come into play, resulting in an interpretive orientation towards the discourse even in the initial phase. The second is to interpret the pragmatic, syntactic and textual characteristics in discourse in combination with its intertextual and situational contexts. The third is to explain the relationship between situational contexts, or "transitory social events" and "more durable social structures which shape and are shaped by these events" [18].

Based on the initial framework, the author improves Fairclough's CDA methodology by implementing refinements that enhance the rigor of the original three steps, as outlined below.

An essential first step is to develop methods for systematically describing and documenting specific discursive features within texts, along with the themes that these features reveal. This would help minimize overlooking semantically significant discursive signals in later analysis. In service of realizing this aim, the Chinese source texts and English target texts are aligned paragraph-by-paragraph to establish one-to-one correspondences with the assistance of Microsoft Excel 2022. Specifically, a customized spreadsheet is developed with distinct columns for the source text (ST), target text (TT), specific discursive features of ST and TT, themes of ST and TT, the year of publication, and explanatory notes. Beyond just systematic organization and display, Excel's built-in coding and advanced filtering functionalities show great potential to categorize the textual data, as will be revisited in the forthcoming discussion.

The next phase involves identifying appropriate codes to effectively describe the themes of each ST and TT paragraph. In line with standard research procedures, an initial pilot study should be conducted using a representative sample of texts. This preliminary research will inform the development of codes essential for categorizing the entire dataset. Exploratory analysis indicates that the English translations of the 2003 and 2018 policy papers primarily show minor stylistic or grammatical variations, reflecting the inherent differences between Chinese and English, without significant semantic shifts. However, the 2014 policy paper deviates from this pattern, making it the focal point for code development. The analysis has resulted in the identification of several potential codes to describe the themes in each ST and TT paragraph: ideological debates between China and the EU, China-specific ideological and philosophical concepts, EU-specific geopolitical issues, economic ties between China and the EU, and the employment of political language clichés.

These initial codes are then utilized to classify the full textual data set of the Chinese and English versions of China's

2014 EU policy paper. It is important to recognize that as the in-depth analysis continues, the preliminary codes may need to be altered, refined, or expanded based on new understandings of the discursive features in the data.

After labeling the entire textual dataset with the identified codes, Excel's filtering functions are employed to display data associated with a particular code, for example, ideological debates between China and the EU. This focused analysis enables an evaluation of whether this theme appears more frequently in the Chinese or English versions of China's 2014 EU policy paper. It also facilitates a detailed exploration of specific ideological disputes, like those concerning human rights, offering insights into how these topics are articulated and debated across different languages.

By analyzing the variations in discursive features and themes between the Chinese and English versions, one can identify the translation strategies used in the English version. A comparative study of the translation strategies across the 2003, 2014, and 2018 policy papers will illustrate how translation purposes have evolved. This examination will consider the contextual circumstances of the EU, China, and their mutual relations, alongside the evolving power dynamics between these two entities from 2003 to 2018.

3. Findings

Comparative analysis indicates a predominance of literal translation strategies in the English translations of the 2013 and 2018 policy papers. In contrast, the 2014 policy paper's translation process exhibits three distinct strategies related to ideological filtering, balancing of priorities, and nuanced negotiation. These strategies will be subject to detailed examination in the subsequent analysis.

3.1. Filtering Ideological Divergences and China-specific Politico-Philosophical Concepts

In the process of translating from Chinese to English, a translation strategy is employed to filter clashes of national interests stemming from fundamental ideological divergences between China and the EU. For instance, narratives related to the political concept of multi-polarity experience substantial modification in the translation process. Example 1 is extracted from the Chinese version of China's 2014 EU policy paper. It suggests that China and the EU share the goal of establishing a multi-polar world order, which relates to global governance structures. This specific content is conspicuously omitted from the translated English version.

Example (1):

ST: 中欧作为最具代表性的新兴市场国家和发达国家集团, 对构建多极世界拥有重要的战略共识, 是维护世界和平的两大力量。

Gloss: China and the EU, as the most representative

emerging market country and developed country group, have important strategic consensus on constructing a multi-polar world, and are two great forces safeguarding world peace. (The Chinese version, 2014)

The omission was probably made to prevent potential conflicts with the EU, since China and the EU have different ideological perspectives on a multi-polar world order, and the overall global governance structures.

In the Chinese context, multi-polarity specifically refers to the rise of multiple major powers and centers of authority, rather than a single dominant superpower. It serves to facilitate a system of checks and balances that helps mitigate the risk of one powerful state coming to dominate international affairs, and contributes to the diversity of countries' developmental paths, political structures, social institutions, cultural legacies and religious tradition. On the other hand, the EU views a multi-polar world as a global system featuring multiple major powers that possess comparable military, economic, and political strength. These powers engage in fluctuating partnerships and strategic contestation to address major global challenges. In this sense, multi-polarity is often associated with a zero-sum competitive mindset, which the EU is trying to move away from [19].

The core ideological divergence regarding the interpretation of multi-polarity between China and the EU is that the EU views this concept through the lens of zero-sum competition, whereas China does not embrace this competitive perspective. Retaining the statement in the translated English version that both China and the EU aim for a multi-polar world order risks significant misinterpretation. Specifically, it could mistakenly suggest that China endorses a zero-sum, competitive approach and exerts pressure on the EU to adopt an identical stance, which directly contradicts China's distinct understanding of multi-polarity. This discrepancy likely motivated the Chinese translators to intentionally omit that particular reference.

Furthermore, a translation strategy is employed to filter concepts specific to China's political situations and philosophical traditions. In other words, the English version of China's 2014 EU policy paper contains fewer references to China's domestic policy initiatives, national development goals, efforts to enhance its comprehensive national power, and Chinese cultural and ethical concepts compared to the original Chinese text.

For instance, while the Chinese version mentions specific domestic development goals and policies like 两个一百年 [Two Centenary Goals] and 一国两制 [One Country, Two Systems], these references are omitted in the translated English version, as demonstrated in Example 2.

Example (2)

ST: 欧盟是中国走和平发展道路, 推动世界多极化的重要战略伙伴, 是中国实现“新四化”和“两个一百年”奋斗目标的重要合作对象。

Gloss: The EU is an important strategic partner for China in taking the path of peaceful development and promoting the multi-polarization of the world. It is also an important coop-

erative partner for China in realizing the ‘Four Modernization’ and the ‘Two Centenary Goals’. (The Chinese version, 2014)

Specifically, the Chinese text spotlights the ubiquitously propagated domestic policy concepts of 新四化 [Four Modernizations] and 两个一百年 [Two Centenary Goals]. These notions intertwine with narratives of national rejuvenation and restoring China’s historic greatness, alongside China’s peaceful developmental trajectory [20]. Such ideas resonate with Chinese citizens taking pride in China’s economic expansion and global eminence. Moreover, representing the EU as a collaborator in realizing China’s national development objectives gratifies domestic patriotism. Inwardly, this mitigates impressions of China conducting itself unilaterally or hostilely globally, constructing the Chinese government as hastening national modernization through skillful foreign relations. The omission of these China-specific concepts from the translated English version could stem from the belief by Chinese translators that discussions around China’s unique governance philosophies would be less relevant to European audiences. Instead, it may be viewed as more prudent to focus the translated English version on areas of mutual interest between China and the EU that resonate more universally, as well as areas that are of greater concern to the EU.

Moreover, the inclination to minimize or exclude references to China’s cultural and ethical concepts is exemplified in Example 3.

Example (3):

ST: 中欧文明伙伴关系: 中国愿与欧盟一道, 将东西方两大文明更紧密结合起来, 树立不同文明和而不同、多元一体、互鉴互学、共同繁荣的典范。

Gloss: China-EU Civilizational Partnership: China is willing to work with the EU to bring the Eastern and Western civilizations into closer connection, and establish a model of different civilizations that are different yet complementary, diversified yet integrated, learning from each other and prospering together. (The Chinese version, 2014)

The Chinese text highlights the importance of the Confucian philosophical notion of “harmony with differences” for China-EU cooperation. This concept suggests that respectful interactions between parties with different identities, values, and principles are essential for meaningful collaboration [21]. However, this idea is omitted from the translated English version, likely to make the text more accessible for foreign audiences. In other words, incorporating Chinese ethical concepts grounded in Confucian philosophy could potentially alienate European readers by exposing them to unfamiliar foreign ideological notions. In essence, the decision was probably made to maintain a more neutral stance and avoid having to explain complex cultural/philosophical concepts specific to China.

3.2. Balancing Different Priorities Between China and the EU

When translating from Chinese to English, a translation

strategy is utilized to emphasize areas of consensus while attenuating points of contention on intricate political matters. Moreover, pragmatic policy points that are likely to be of greater interest and relevance to European audiences are foregrounded.

For instance, content pertaining to human rights issues undergoes significant transformation when being translated into English. Specifically, Example 4 illustrates how human rights matters are discussed in the Chinese version of China’s 2014 EU policy paper. In this excerpt, China expresses willingness for continued human rights dialogue and cooperation with the EU to promote mutual understanding and positive relations. However, this is contingent on the EU not trying to influence China’s human rights policies and judicial system by citing individual cases. Fundamentally, China views human rights as falling fully under its own sovereign jurisdiction and authority. In other words, China asserts its right to determine its own approach to human rights priorities, balancing economic, social, cultural rights along with civil and political rights.

Example (4):

ST: 中方愿在相互尊重和不干涉内政原则的基础上同欧盟继续进行人权对话, 并在对话框架下开展人权合作, 增进相互了解, 为促进中欧关系发展、推动中欧人权事业共同进步发挥积极作用, 欧方应同等重视包括公民、政治、经济、社会及文化权利和发展权在内的各类人权, 客观公正看待中国人权状况, 停止利用个案干涉中国司法主权和内政, 为双方人权对话与合作创造良好气氛。

Gloss: The Chinese side is willing, on the basis of respecting each other and non-interference in internal affairs, to continue the human rights dialogue with the EU and carry out human rights cooperation within the framework of the dialogue, to enhance mutual understanding, play a positive role in promoting the development of China-EU relations and the common progress of the human rights cause in China and the EU. The European side should give equal importance to all kinds of human rights including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development, take an objective and impartial view of China’s human rights situation, stop using individual cases to interfere in China’s judicial sovereignty and internal affairs, and create a good atmosphere for the human rights dialogue and cooperation between the two sides. (The Chinese version, 2014)

The English version of China’s 2014 EU policy paper uses Example 5 to illustrate human rights issues, which emphasizes the shared aspiration between China and the EU to collaborate and advance dialogues on this complex political matter.

Example (5):

TT: The two sides reaffirmed the importance of the promotion and protection of human rights. Both sides agreed to deepen exchanges on human rights at the bilateral and international level on the basis of equality and mutual respect, and to strengthen their Human Rights Dialogue with constructive

discussions on jointly agreed key priority areas. (The English version, 2014)

A comparison of the Chinese and English versions reveals that the content highlighting China and the EU's shared aspiration to cooperate and promote dialogue on human rights issues is maintained in the English version. However, some other content present in the Chinese version is omitted from the English version. The transformations likely occurred to avoid potential ideological friction with the EU over divergent human rights perspectives.

Specifically, Example 4 highlights China's objection to the EU using individual cases to criticize China's judicial sovereignty and domestic human rights matters. This stems from China's conception that human rights fall squarely under its own sovereign jurisdiction, to be guided by its unique developmental circumstances, cultural traditions, and ethical framework - not external standards. As such, China rejects outside criticism of its human rights situation as violating its sovereignty. In contrast, the EU upholds a universalist conception of human rights transcending national boundaries. It believes it has the right to scrutinize other countries' human rights records based on its standards [22].

Furthermore, Example 4 underscores China's assertion of its right to determine its own approach to prioritizing different human rights categories. Specifically, China believes in balancing economic, social, and cultural rights alongside civil and political rights. This aligns with China's view that economic and development rights should take precedence, reflecting its focus on raising living standards and achieving national development goals. In contrast, the EU places greater emphasis on civil and political rights as fundamental human rights [22]. This contrasting prioritization stems from the different developmental paths of China and the EU. China's approach is rooted in the longstanding position that a nation must first alleviate widespread poverty and build economic foundations before it can fully address other human rights issues. On the other hand, the EU's stance arises from its members being largely developed Western nations that have already attained basic economic rights and can now prioritize individual civil liberties.

In essence, the content in Example 4, specifically China's objection to the EU's criticism of its judicial sovereignty and human rights situation, as well as China's assertion of its right to prioritize different human rights categories, encapsulates China's ideological stance on human rights - one that sharply diverges from the EU's definition. To avoid potential controversy among the international audience, especially EU officials who are the primary target of the translated English version, Chinese translators may have chosen to omit the content as in Example 4.

Despite the different ideological stances, since human rights is a key issue in China-EU relations, the content emphasizing their shared desire to cooperate and promote dialogue on human rights is maintained in the English version. This may be to demonstrate China's openness to dialogue on

human rights as a friendly gesture towards the EU. Notably, the European Commission's 2013 policy paper on EU-China relations stated:

Deepen exchanges on human rights at the bilateral and international level on the basis of equality and mutual respect. Strengthen the Human Rights Dialogue with constructive discussions on jointly agreed key priority areas [23].

Therefore, an additional rationale may have been China's desire to reciprocate the EU's attitude by depicting human rights issues in a manner that aligns with the EU's stated position favoring constructive dialogue on human rights.

In addition, pragmatic policy points that are more likely to be of interest and relevance to European audiences are given greater prominence. Specifically, the translated English versions include discussions of geopolitical topics and regions that are of greater importance to EU interests - content that is absent from the original Chinese texts. Example 6 addresses political issues and security situations in regions like Iran, Syria, Ukraine, the Middle East, and North Africa - areas that are of higher geopolitical concern for the EU compared to China. This demonstrates an intentional effort to adapt the translated English versions in a way that better corresponds with the priorities of the EU.

Example (6):

TT: Both sides reviewed a number of important international political issues including Iran, Syria, Ukraine and the security situation in their respective neighbourhoods. They welcomed the recent first round of the China-EU Dialogue on the Middle East and North Africa. They exchanged views on recent developments in Africa in view of the upcoming EU-Africa Summit. (The English version, 2014)

3.3. Negotiating Towards Consensus and Cooperation

The translation process also employs a strategy aimed at negotiating consensus and cooperation between China and the EU. This strategy is reflected in the English versions of China's EU policy papers placing greater emphasis on encouraging the EU to follow through on its previous commitments and promises. By stressing that the EU needs to uphold these obligations, China can hold the EU accountable and make it more difficult for the EU to back out of agreements or change its stance. This rhetorical approach of highlighting adherence to prior commitments gives China more leverage in pursuing its interests through cooperation with the EU, as exemplified in Example 7.

Example (7):

TT: The EU strongly supports China's swift participation in the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) negotiation. China and the EU consider the participation of China in the negotiation as an important stepping stone towards the future multilateralisation of TiSA. (The English version, 2014)

Revealingly, the English text encompasses discourse relevant to China's TiSA (Trade in Services Agreement) associ-

ation and the EU's stance on China's participation, while the Chinese version lacks such salient subject matter.

Specifically, TiSA negotiations stemmed from dissatisfaction with the stagnated Doha Round of WTO discussions that commenced in 2001 intending to open markets to developing countries but stalled over disagreements between industrialized and emerging economies. With Doha languishing, several WTO members initiated multilateral TiSA negotiations in 2012, comprising developed countries like the EU, United States, Canada, Japan and Australia seeking to liberalize service sectors such as banking, healthcare and transport. Emerging economies like China, India and Brazil have been excluded from TiSA over concerns that they would not agree to proposed services liberalization rules [24].

In light of the situational context, the English text can be understood more completely. Precisely, the text emphasizes the EU's strong support for China's entry into TiSA and the benefits of China's participation in the negotiations. This may be a tactic to secure the EU's reaffirmation of its earlier commitment to advocate for China joining the TiSA talks [25]. On the other hand, the Chinese version excludes the content related to TiSA, reflecting the government's attention to domestic public trust in its competence. The fact that the TiSA negotiations remained in an ongoing and unresolved state may explain China's reluctance to draw attention to unfinished international agreements during that particular period. Doing so could jeopardize the government's credibility at home if the deals fall through before finalization.

4. Discussion

The evolution in China's translation strategies, as observed between the 2003 and 2014 policy paper versions, indicates a shift from a more straightforward and potentially less nuanced approach to a more strategic deployment of translation as a soft power tool. This transition reflects a deeper understanding of how translation can be leveraged as a means of advancing the country's strategic interests and negotiating with other nations on the global stage.

Specifically, the shift involves a heightened awareness of the needs and perspectives of China's various interlocutors, as well as a more careful consideration of how certain concepts may be received and interpreted within diverse cultural and political contexts. This orientation is evidenced by the observed intertextual connections between the English versions of the EU's China policy papers and China's EU policy papers (as discussed in Example 5), indicating that concerted efforts have been made to engage with the official positions of the EU within China's official translation institutions.

Previous research on CPD translation has primarily focused on content pertaining to domestic affairs, with particular emphasis on portrayals of central government and leadership [6, 8-12]. Scholars have generally conceptualized the translation purpose of such discourse as elucidating China to an international audience or constructing a national image.

However, an analysis of the translated English version of China's 2014 EU policy paper, in conjunction with the evolution of translation strategies between 2003 and 2014, reveals alternative purposes. This revised approach to translation prioritizes the EU's concerns and minimizes potential ideological divergences, thereby fostering a conducive environment to Sino-EU economic negotiations.

This conceptualization of translation purpose as negotiation aligns with President Xi Jinping's prioritization of Sino-EU economic cooperation, evidenced by his inaugural visit to EU headquarters on March 31, 2014, and the bilingual release of China's second EU policy paper on April 2, 2014. A word cloud analysis (Figure 1) of the 50 most frequent terms in the English version of China's 2014 EU policy paper, excluding non-substantive stop words, visually corroborates this focus. The prominence of 'trade,' 'investment,' and 'economic' in the word cloud underscores the centrality of economic cooperation in China-EU relations.

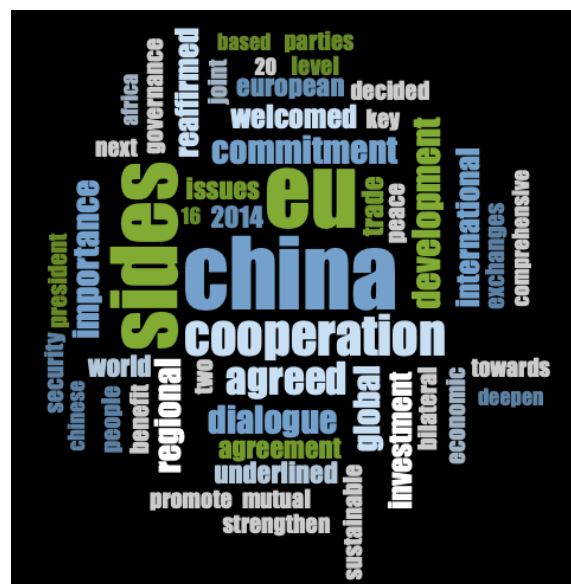


Figure 1. 50 most frequent words in the English version of China's 2014 EU policy paper using Nvivo 14.0.

This emphasis on economic partnership emerged against a backdrop of global economic challenges. The 2008 global financial crisis significantly impacted both entities, with China's GDP growth rate declining from 11.5% (2007) to 9.9% (2008) [26], and the EU's GDP contracting by 4.3% in 2009. Moreover, the EU grappled with its own sovereign debt crisis from 2009 to 2012, particularly affecting countries such as Greece, Ireland, and Portugal, leading to stringent austerity measures and economic instability across the Eurozone [27]. Concurrently, China launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, a \$1 trillion infrastructure project spanning Asia, Europe, and Africa, signaling China's vision for global economic integration [28]. This confluence of economic challenges and opportunities catalyzed China's recalibration

of translation strategies in EU-focused policy papers, emphasizing negotiation and mutual benefit in its diplomatic discourse.

The evolution of China's translation strategies, as evidenced in the 2014 and 2018 versions of its EU policy papers, indicates a return to a more conventional and literal translation strategy. This shift suggests a developing trend in China's diplomatic communication, characterized by a more precise and consistent presentation of its perspective on Sino-EU relations and its vision for bilateral cooperation across different languages. This approach can be conceptualized as the translation purpose of projecting self-representation, reflecting China's intent to maintain a uniform diplomatic message regardless of the language medium.

This transformation can be contextualized within the broader framework of China's expanding economic cooperation with the EU, particularly through the 16+1 Cooperation Framework (now 17+1 with Greece's inclusion). Initiated in 2012, this framework has demonstrated remarkable momentum. Trade volume between China and Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries increased by 55.4% from 2012 to 2018, while Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the region more than tripled, surpassing \$10 billion [29]. The success of the 16+1 Cooperation Framework has arguably enhanced China's economic and political leverage within the EU, potentially altering the balance of power in China's favor.

Applying Fairclough's (1989/1995) CDA framework, which posits that discourse is both socially constitutive and socially shaped, we can examine the interplay between China's evolving translation strategies and its growing economic and political influence in the EU. Fairclough's theory posits that discursive practices both shape and are shaped by material conditions, including economic dynamics and geopolitical relations [18]. Applying this theoretical premise, China's recent shift towards more literal and traditional translation strategies in its EU policy papers reflects its enhanced global economic and political standing. More specifically, this newfound strength appears to have engendered a specific translation purpose: precisely articulating China's perspectives on the historical development and future trajectory of Sino-EU relations. The translation purpose of projecting self-representation in Sino-EU relations aligns with the observations of Li and Xu [6]. They noted that the translated English versions of China's domestic work reports and white papers maintain fidelity to source texts in terms of ideological implications.

The evolution can also be contextualized within the escalating US-China trade war of 2018, a conflict precipitating notable shifts in EU-China trade dynamics: EU exports to China grew by 6.2% due to trade diversion, while China's exports to the EU increased by 9.8%, exacerbating the trade imbalance to €185 billion. Concurrently, the EU's push for market access reciprocity and ongoing Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) negotiations, introduced additional complexities [30]. In this intricate context, China's adoption of a more literal and consistent translation approach

for its policy papers on the EU can be interpreted as a strategic response. This shift aims to ensure clear communication, minimize divergent interpretations, maintain consistency and enhance efficiency amid global trade tensions.

5. Conclusion

The comparative analysis of China's EU policy papers from 2003 to 2018, examining both Chinese and English versions, reveals evolving translation strategies. The 2013 and 2018 policy papers predominantly employ literal translation strategies in their English versions. In contrast, the 2014 policy paper demonstrates a more nuanced approach through three distinct strategies: filtering ideological divergences and China-specific politico-philosophical concepts; balancing different priorities between China and the EU; and negotiating towards consensus and cooperation. The transition from the 2003 to the 2014 policy paper translations indicates a shift from a straightforward approach to a more strategic use of translation as a soft power tool. However, the 2018 policy paper reverts to a more traditional, literal translation strategy. This reversion suggests China's increasing preference for consistent articulation of its positions across languages, potentially indicating a refinement in its soft power communication strategies.

The longitudinal analysis of translation strategies shows a significant evolution in the conceptualization of translation purposes within China's political institutions. Specifically, the translation purpose has evolved from primarily facilitating negotiations to projecting self-representation, characterized by a more precise and consistent presentation of its perspective on Sino-EU relations and its vision for bilateral cooperation across different languages.

The evolution of translation strategies and purposes reflects the growing economic interdependence between China and the EU, particularly evident in the emphasis on economic cooperation in both the Chinese and English versions of China's EU policy papers. This development has been influenced by the 2008 global financial crisis, the EU's debt crisis from 2009 to 2012, and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which underscores its vision for global economic integration. As China's economic cooperation with the EU has expanded, it has enhanced China's political leverage within the EU, allowing for a more assertive articulation of its perspectives on Sino-EU relations. Furthermore, the escalating US-China trade war which has significantly altered EU-China trade dynamics, has led China to prioritize clear communication and consistency in its discourse to minimize misunderstandings and enhance efficiency amid global trade tensions.

In essence, our findings offer insights into how emerging powers adjust their discursive practices in response to changes in their geopolitical status, while also highlighting the crucial role of translation in the dissemination of international policy.

Abbreviations

EU	European Union
CPD	Chinese Political Discourse
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
ST	Source Text
TT	Target Text
TiSA	Trade in Services Agreement
WTO	World Trade Organization
CEE	Central and Eastern European
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Biography

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