

A Brief Analysis of the Characteristics of Interpretation Text of the Speech of Minister for Foreign Affairs of China at China-CELAC Forum

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Abstract: With the continuous improvement of China's international status, Chinese leaders often deliver speeches on some important international occasions. The English translation of diplomatic speech concerns the interests and honor of China, so the role of interpretation for diplomatic speech in this process is very important. Taking foreign minister's speech at the plenary session of the Fourth Ministerial Meeting of China-CELAC Forum as the research object, this study analyzes the characteristics of the speech in three aspects: syntactic choice, choice for figure of speech and the use of metaphor from the perspective of interpretation text, and repeatedly compares it with the speeches of previous leaders, trying to summarize the overall style of diplomatic discourse, so as to provide reference translation strategies for interpreters' real-time interpretation.

Keywords: Diplomatic speech; Diplomatic interpretation; Figure of speech; Metaphor; Translation strategies

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1. Introduction

As China plays an increasingly important role on the international stage, the speeches made by Chinese leaders at some significant international occasions have drawn more and more attention from people both at home and abroad. The English translation of these speeches plays a crucial role in promoting the image and culture of a country and facilitating the understanding of China by overseas people. Diplomatic translation has two important characteristics: first, the audience often comes from different countries and areas, with significant differences in language habits and cultural backgrounds; second, the content to be translated is highly political and has a high degree of political sensitivity. Accurate translation can effectively convey the speaker's thoughts, thereby enhancing relations between countries and bolstering interaction and mutual understanding among countries. On the contrary, if there are errors in the translation, the country's image will be damaged, and national interests will be greatly compromised.

Leaders' speeches are aimed at the global audience and represent an important way for a country's culture to

go global. Translation is a conversion activity between different languages. In essence, it is also a cross-cultural communication activity. Therefore, the purpose of translation is to promote the exchange of thoughts and enhance cultural communication. As a medium of cross-cultural communication, translation not only reflects cultural soft power but also helps to enhance such power when it done well^[1].

In the contemporary era, when translating Chinese into foreign languages, translation shall “reposition” the global culture with a positive attitude, so that Chinese culture can truly stand among the cultures of all countries in the world^[2]. Under this goal, translators shoulder the mission of cross-cultural communication, promote Chinese culture to go out, and ultimately realize the common prosperity of Chinese culture and all cultures in the world.

Based on this, this study attempts to analyze foreign minister’s speech at China-CELAC Forum from the perspective of interpretation text, and deeply analyze the composition mode of diplomatic discourse from three aspects: the syntactic choice of sentences, the rhetorical choice of passages, and the use of metaphor. The leader’s speech is not a simple pile of information, but a set of well-designed strategic narrative system. It builds China’s image as a responsible power through multiple discourse strategies, and clearly conveys the strategic positioning of China-LAC relations to the world.

2. Syntactic selection and effect analysis

Syntactic rhetoric refers to the rhetorical activity of choosing sentence patterns based on specific expression needs when elaborating a certain meaning, using the sentence as the grammatical unit, so as to achieve the communication purpose and expression effect^[3]. The research corpus of this study is the speech manuscripts of Chinese leaders. As a speech manuscript, the first requirement is to enable the audience to understand and clearly hear the main idea the speaker wants to convey. Therefore, the selection of sentence pattern and syntactic rhetoric are important aspects. Good expression not only enables the audience to understand the real meaning the speaker wants to convey, but also makes the listener willing to listen, transforming from passive listening to active listening. Through the analysis of this speech manuscript (foreign minister’s speech at China-CELAC Forum), it can be found that it has the following characteristics in terms of syntactic rhetoric:

2.1. Integration of long and short sentences—concise and vivid expression

A long sentence refers to one with a large number of words and a complex structure^[3]. From the definition, it is not difficult to find that scholars define long sentences based on the number of words and the complexity of the structure, rather than from the perspective of grammatical nature. Therefore, the grammatical nature of a long sentence can be either a simple sentence or a complex sentence. The so-called “many words” and “complex structure” in the definition mainly result from the abundance of modifying and parallel components and the complexity of the structural level. It is precisely because of these characteristics that long sentences are rich in meaning, logically rigorous, and capable of containing a large amount of discourse information^[4]. The concept of a short sentence is the opposite of a long sentence, referring to a sentence with few words and a simple structure. Its main features are simple structure, clear meaning, conciseness, and directness. Both have their own strengths, and the characteristic presented in the corpus is the alternating of long and short sentences. Such a choice of sentence structure combines the rhetorical advantages of both long and short sentences, making the expression more vivid and clear. It avoids the shortcomings of using only short sentences, such as limited expression capacity and incomplete sentence meaning, as well as the drawbacks of using only long sentences, such as being lengthy, cumbersome, and stiff.

Example 1: Firmly support each other's core interests. Latin America is the common home of LAC people, not the backyard of any country. China firmly supports LAC countries in safeguarding independence, unity and self-improvement, exploring a modernization path suitable for their own national conditions, and opposing power politics and interference in internal affairs. Internal affairs concern China's national sovereignty and territorial integrity. We hope and believe that the LAC side will continue to firmly adhere to "one China policy" and support China's legitimate position.

At the beginning of Example 1, a short sentence was used to explain the main idea that China and LAC should firmly support each other's core interests. Then, a long sentence was used to express in detail how to uphold each other's core interests. China firmly supports LAC countries in safeguarding independence, solidarity, and self-improvement, and provides assistance to the best of its ability. LAC side always adheres to "One China Principle" and supports China's legitimate position on major issues. Through the analysis of long and short sentences in the speech manuscript, it is not difficult to see that the vast majority of the ways in which long and short sentences are used in combination are to first use a short sentence to point out the main idea, and then use a long sentence to elaborate in detail around the short sentence that points out the main idea earlier. This kind of expression with both detailed and simplified elements not only avoid the lengthy and complex sentences caused by too many long sentences with unclear meanings, but also overcomes the drawbacks of short sentences clustering together with insufficient details, and rigid and lifeless expressions. It makes the entire speech with clear main point both vivid, rhythmic, and appropriate in detail and conciseness.

2.2. Complete and loose sentences appear alternately—express flexibly and rhythmically

The complete sentence refers to the following: first, the structure should be the same or similar; second, the sentences have opposite levels and oblique tones, but this is not a necessary point; third, the number of characters in sentences should be equal. The overall impression of a complete sentence is uniformity and neatness, giving people a sense of rhythm when reading. In contrast, the structure of a loose sentence is not uniform, its sentence structure is flexible, and there is no limit on the number of characters. Through the definition of a complete sentence, it is not difficult to find that a complete sentence is also a rhetorical method with strong beauty in form, giving people a sense of neatness and symmetry visually and a sense of rising and falling in cadence^[5]. The rhetorical effect of loose sentences is to give the speech with a lively and flexible beauty, and they can be used to elaborate on parts that require detailed description. The alternating use of complete and loose sentences makes the language expression contain loose feature in complete structure, with a loose form but coherent meaning. By integrating the rhetorical effects of complete and loose sentences, the entire expression not only becomes more flexible and vivid with a sense of rhythm and neatness, but also enhances the coherence of the sentence momentum^[6].

Example 2: China and LAC are thousands of miles apart, and what connects us? It is not a geopolitical game, nor a game of major power rivalry, but a common adherence to fairness and justice, and a common pursuit of modernization. China-LAC cooperation rejects camp confrontation and advocates openness and win-win results, setting a new model for building a new type of international relations and providing new impetus for the Global South cooperation.

Example 3: This morning, the president delivered an important speech at the opening ceremony of this meeting, stressing that China is willing to work with LAC side to launch five major projects, seek common development and revitalization, and jointly build a China-LAC community with shared future.

The combination of complete and loose sentences in this way makes the entire sentence both easy to read

and flexible and vivid. In Example 2, “not a geopolitical game”, “nor a game of major power rivalry”, and “a common adherence to fairness and justice”, “a common pursuit of modernization” are respectively similar structures. This combination conveys the close and intimate relationship between China and LAC to the audience clearly. At the same time, it also endows the speech with a strong rhythm, making it powerful when read and cadenced when heard. In Example 3, “seek common development and revitalization” and “jointly build a China-LAC community with shared future” are similar structures. This combination that are paired and related in meaning makes the entire sentence coherent in momentum and profound in meaning. It not only has the neat and uniform beauty of complete sentences, but also the flexible and vivid dynamic of loose sentences. While achieving the rhetorical effect of being reasonably detailed and appropriately balanced in complexity and simplicity, it also endows the speech with a symmetrical rhythm, expressing China’s vision of jointly building a bright future and working together for development and rejuvenation with LAC.

In leaders’ speeches, the collocation of complete and loose sentences is common, which is a frequently used rhetorical method. Such collocation makes the sentences coherent, rhythmic and expressive, and plays an important role in forming the unique rhetorical style of China’s diplomatic discourse text.

3. Application and effect analysis of figure of speech

This article mainly employs the rhetorical device of parallelism. Parallelism refers to the arrangement of three or more language units, which can be phrases, sentences or paragraphs ^[7]. To further define parallelism, first, structurally, the structures of the parallel items shall be similar or identical; second, semantically, the meanings of the parallel items shall be close or related; third, in terms of tone, the tones of the parallel items shall be consistent or the same ^[3].

Example 4: In today’s world, the trend of world multipolarization and economic globalization is rolling forward. However, some great countries believe in the supremacy of power and the priority of their own countries, try to replace international rules with the law of the jungle, replace the multilateral system with unilateral hegemony, and bully other countries with tariffs as weapons. These practices violate the legitimate rights and interests of all countries in the world, including China and LAC countries, damage the rule-based multilateral trading system, and also impact the stability of the global political and economic order.

In example 4, the three “verb.+noun.+with...” parallel items appear continuously without any other language materials in the middle, which together form a continuous parallel block, emphasizing that some countries in the world are implementing hegemonism and power politics, which has seriously endangered the legitimate rights and interests of surrounding countries. On the whole, the parallel items composed of sentences has a strong sense of rhythm, which not only reflects the logical rigor and thoughtfulness of the political speech, the objectivity and fairness of the political speech, but also enhances the acceptability of the audience and the rhythmic sense of the speech itself.

Example 5: China is willing to cooperate closely with LAC side in various fields under the framework of “the Belt and Road Initiative” and Global Development Initiative to improve the level of interconnectivity and maintain the stability of the industrial and supply chains.

In this example, the three phrases “cooperate closely with LAC side in various fields”, “improve the level of interconnectivity” and “maintain the stability of the industrial and supply chains” form a group of phrase parallelism, which act as objects in the whole sentence and directly express China’s future development

arrangements. This makes the sentences cadenced, the phonological structure smooth, and the overall sense of language rhythm strengthened. It emphasizes that China and LAC side will strengthen practical cooperation in economic and trade aspects, and make it easy for the audience to receive the core information while reading it catchy.

4. Application and effect analysis of metaphor

Metaphor is not only a cognitive mechanism of human beings but also a conscious choice of discourse by the speaker, which can help build social relations and social identities ^[8]. Politicians often need to adopt certain discourse strategies when constructing national identities, and metaphor, as a diplomatic discourse strategy, can influence people's thinking, reshape people's attitudes, and even help reorganize the reality to form the conceptual structure expected by the speaker ^[9], thereby achieving the construction of national identity and strengthening the audience's identity of the discourse country ^[10]. This article intends to explore the construction of national identity by leaders in the speech at China-CELAC Forum from the perspective of metaphor analysis.

The main metaphor categories include building, journey, personification, transportation, sports, physical environment, plants, conflicts, etc.^[11] the first three categories appear most frequently in speeches. The following is a further analysis

4.1. Metaphor of building

The building domain is a very important primitive domain, which conceptualizes the abstract and complex system in our daily experience by characterizing things and events such as theory, outlook, career and relationship as things related to building in various discourses ^[3]. The forward-looking building metaphor in political discourse usually has a strong positive connotation. And politicians apply this metaphor to expound the national development strategy, express their desire for a valuable social goal, imply the development in a certain direction, and indicate that people need to work together to achieve this goal.

Example 6: LAC leaders also made important statements and formed broad consensus. This has drawn a blueprint for the long-term future of China-LAC relations and provided strategic guidance. China is willing to work with LAC side to jointly implement the relevant agreements.

Example 7: China will implement a series of measures announced by President, continue to strengthen civilized dialogue with LAC side, expand exchanges with universities, think tanks, media and local governments, continue to hold China-LAC Region People-to-People Friendship Forum and local government cooperation forums, transcend cultural barriers and conflicts through exchanges and mutual learning of civilization, and constantly consolidate the public opinion foundation for China-LAC friendship.

Example 8: The two sides actively promoted the in-depth docking of "the Belt and Road Initiative" with the development strategy of LAC side. Chancay Port, large industrial parks and other major projects were completed one after another, and new cooperation in new energy, photovoltaic, electric vehicles, digital technology, cross-border e-commerce and other fields flourished.

In the speech, the speaker projected the original domain of building into the target domain, and introduced some concepts of "blueprint", "consolidate", "complete", etc., to symbolize the development process of China-LAC relations with the architectural process and related things. On the one hand, the use of keywords such as "blueprint", "consolidate", "complete" can reflect the macro overview of the development of China-LAC

relations in the minds of the audience through people's intuitive understanding of building, and show the audience the necessity and importance of maintaining the sound relationship between the two sides, which is conducive to audience to understand China's foreign policy; On the other hand, just as the construction of buildings requires the builders to work together and build a solid foundation step by step, the development of diplomatic relations also requires all departments to work together to build a "relationship building". Reflecting the construction process such as "construction" and "building" to the dynamic process of the development of diplomatic relations is precisely to convey such a message to audiences all over the world.

In general, the speech of Chinese leaders at China-CELAC Forum is committed to conveying the concept of friendship between China and its neighbors to the world, and then shaping the national image of "relationship builder".

4.2. Metaphor of journey

In addition to building, metaphor of journey is also a metaphor often used by Chinese leaders to describe economic development^[12].

Example 9: China-LAC science and technology partnership program, China-LAC cultural exchange year and other activities were successfully held, and the "LAC craze" in China and the "China craze" in LAC were rising simultaneously, with both sides reaching out to each other.

Example 10: China is willing to work with LAC to practice real multilateralism, adhere to extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits, lead the reform of global governance with the concept of fairness, justice, openness and inclusiveness, jointly safeguard the international system with the United Nations at the core and the international order based on international law, and continuously improve the representation and voice of developing countries.

Example 11: China firmly supports LAC countries in safeguarding independence, unity and self-improvement, exploring a modernization path suitable for their own national conditions, and opposing power politics and interference in internal affairs.

Under this metaphorical framework, the speech introduced the concepts related to the journey, such as "reaching out to each other", "work with... together", "path", and reflected the specific and familiar journey domain into the abstract and complex political domain. Among them, the "path" metaphor appears most frequently. China and western developed countries have chosen different development paths, which is a major difference between the two sides. Some developed countries use this as an excuse to give China all kinds of unfair treatment in international activities. However, it is for this reason that on some major international occasions, China has unswervingly reaffirmed Chinese political position, stressed that China adheres to the path of industrialization of scientific development and peaceful development suitable for its own national conditions, and has established an image of a great country with peace and development as its goal, cutting through the thorns and obstacles, and forging ahead bravely.

4.3. Metaphor of personification

Metaphor of personification refers to taking human themselves as the standard to measure things around them, and using it to perceive the world. Therefore, metaphor of personification has become an important tool for human beings to recognize things and express ideas^[13].

Example 12: As developing countries and members of the Global South family, China and LAC shall work

together to safeguard our legitimate rights and interests.

In the above example sentence, when the speaker described China and LAC, in order to enhance the effect of language expression, the speaker used “family members” to refer to the status of China and LAC in the developing countries and the Global South by borrowing the human body system, expressing that the future development of China and LAC needs the support and shelter of the developing countries and the Global South.

5. Conclusion

The foreign minister’s speech at China-CELAC Forum and the corresponding interpretation practice are a vivid and profound presentation of the diplomatic discourse system of major country with Chinese characteristics. The study shows that the original text constructs a three-dimensional narrative through subtle sentence arrangement, rhetoric selection and the use of metaphor. When interpreting, the interpreter can grasp these core elements, strive to improve the comprehensibility and acceptance of the Chinese concepts in the English language environment on the premise of preserving information and strategic intention. Diplomatic interpretation is by no means a simple code switching, but a highly challenging practice of strategic communication. Its effectiveness is directly related to the global cognition and recognition of the Chinese concepts and Chinese plans. With the ever-changing international environment, it is of unprecedented urgency to improve the strategic communication ability of diplomatic interpretation. This requires us to fundamentally change our concept and incorporate interpretation into the core link of national international communication capacity-building; Always adhere to the audience orientation and deeply study the history, culture and realistic concerns of the target country, so as to integrate Chinese and foreign languages, and tell more inspiring and persuasive Chinese stories. Only in this way can diplomatic interpretation truly become a strategic bridge across the civilization gap and connecting China and the world, and lay a solid language and cognitive foundation for China to participate in global governance and promote the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind.

Note

The example sentences in this study are all extracted from the speech at China-CELAC Forum, and the bolded part in the examples is for the purpose of highlighting.

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