| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

National Image in English Translation of Country Leader's New Year Greetings

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| **ABSTRACT**

Based on Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis model, this study investigates China's image in the English translation of the country leader's New Year Greetings from 2014 to 2021. The method of corpus linguistics is applied, and the English modal system from the systemic functional perspective is employed. The study reveals that the country's image is hardworking, enjoying good governance and social harmony, pursuing peace and development, as well as international cooperation, which can be reflected in the use of high-frequency content words, keywords, and modal verbs in the discourse. The county's image construction in the translation discourse is influenced by translators, media, and sociocultural factors.

1. Introduction

As comprehensive national power improves, China has gained international attention, and the country's image has become important. National image refers to the "evaluation and identification" (Guan, 1999) of the general public, both at home and abroad, of a country and its behavioural activities, mostly based on relevant information and people's own experiences (Sun, 2002). Compared with the majority of native people, foreigners usually have less personal experience of a country. However, government public discourse can be a window for the international community to understand a country, and its translation can reproduce and reconstruct the country's image (Wang, 2018). Therefore, this study explores the construction of China's image in the English translation of the country leader's New Year Greetings.

2. Literature Review

Most studies on the construction of China's national image currently involve such discourse as literary works and television news. For example, Zhang (2017) analyzed the image of China in the translation of Chinese Literature; Duan and Zhao (2014) explored the country's image in CCTV-4's TV program "Going Around China". As for government public discourse, related studies centred on government work reports, white paper documents, and leaders' speeches (Hu & Li, 2017). For example, Gong, Jiang, and Yu (2020) analyzed China's image in the English translation of the Government Work Report; Dou et al. (2012) explored the construction of national identity in the white paper on national defence; Hu and Tian (2018) studied China's diplomatic image based on important speeches by government leader.

However, as important public discourse, the translation of a country leader's New Year Greetings has been little studied. This paper analyses the construction of a national image in the English translation of the Chinese leader's New Year Greetings between 2014 and 2021 based on Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis model (Fairclough, 1995).

The research questions include:

  (1) How China's image is constructed in the English translation of country leader's New Year Greetings?
  (2) What factors contribute to the country's image building through discourse?

3. Research Design

3.1 Research data

This paper takes the English translation of Chinese leader's New Year Greetings from 2014 to 2021 as research data, with contemporaneous New Year Greetings of America as reference. Although the total characters of the two differ, the time span, subject matter, and genre of discourse are the same. Besides, the word frequency is measured by 1,000 words, so they are comparable.

3.2 Theoretical framework

This study is based on Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis model, combined with the modality system of systemic functional grammar (Halliday, 1994). From "text", "discourse practice", and "social practice" levels (Fairclough, 1995), it analyses the English translation of the Chinese leader's New Year Greetings.

3.2.1 Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis argues that the output and interpretation of a text are closely related to social power relations, and as a social practice, language can establish, maintain or destroy a social relationship (Fairclough, 1989). Discourse is not arbitrary symbols. "How" and "why" the words are organized in a certain way are the concerns of critical discourse analysis. On the basis of "discourse as practice", Fairclough (1995) developed a three-dimensional model for discourse analysis involving "language text", "discourse practice", and "social practice", as shown in Figure 1.
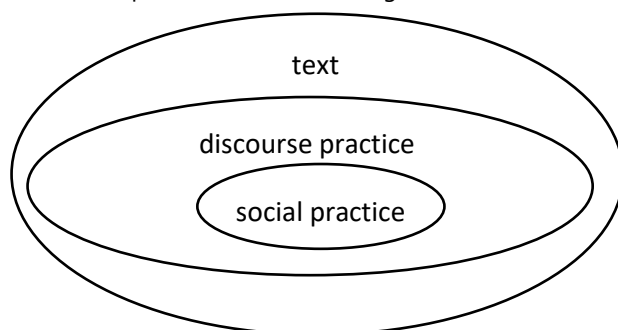
Figure1. Three-dimensional framework of critical discourse analysis

In the out layer is language text that people can read or hear directly, which can be analyzed through text forms, including vocabulary (Fairclough, 1995), such as "high-frequency words" and "key words". First, high-frequency words reflect key information by repeatedly presenting a certain idea, which could influence reader's or listener's attitude evaluation (McEnery et al., 2006); second, key words reflect discourse topic (Turney, 2000), which could present speaker's attitude and value orientation (Qian, 2010). In addition, collocations provide the lexical feature of "co-occurrence" as a complement to textual context and an extension of analytical perspective (Sinclair, 1991).

In the middle layer is the process of how discourse is produced and received (Fairclough, 1995). In this regard, Fairclough (1995) emphasizes "discourse representation" in media, which plays a "mediation" role in the dissemination of public discourse. "Mediation" links texts to society. For example, media can report news neutrally and objectively, while it can also misinterpret the original meaning (Wodak, 2001); similarly, in translated discourse, translators can be faithful to original texts, while they can also do the opposite. Therefore, it can be seen that the English translation of a country leader's New Year Greetings can be influenced by translators (Hu & Tian, 2018).

In the inner layer are social factors, including "the context of situation" and "the context of culture" (Fairclough, 1995), which contribute to a deeper interpretation of discourse (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). Discourse and socio-culture are intertwined (Halliday, 1970). Socio-culture influences people's output and understanding of discourse, and discourse reproduces socio-culture (Hu & Tian, 2018).

3.2.2 Modality system

Speakers produce discourse through grammatical resources, including tone, modality, and intonation, which serve the interpersonal function of language (Halliday, 1994). As for the modality system, Halliday (1994) quantifies modal operators with three modality values, including low, median, and high, which involve the speaker's attitudinal evaluation of a proposition.

3.3 Research methodology

First, "language text" level. By analyzing the linguistic features of high-frequency words, key words, and modal verbs in the English translation of the Chinese leader's New Year Greetings, this paper reveals the representation of national image within.

Second, "discourse practice" level. The national image building will be explored by analyzing how the English translation of the Chinese leader's New Year Greetings is produced, disseminated, and received.

Third, "social practice" level. This paper explores the factors which influence national image construction in the English translation of the Chinese leader's New Year Greetings: the country's actual conditions, development orientation, and cultural traditions.

4. Results
4.1 "Text" level
4.1.1 High-frequency verbs and national image
With the help of AntConc_64bit (Laurence, 2020), high-frequency content words used in the translation of Chinese New Year Greetings as well as American New Year Greetings are extracted, and the top 20 high-frequency verbs are selected for analysis, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Top 20 high-frequency verbs

No.	Translation of Chinese New Year Greetings		American New Year Greetings	
	Verbs	Frequency (‰)	Verbs	Frequency (‰)
1	made	2.36	make	3.94
2	work	1.46	take	2.46
3	living	1.24	made	1.97
4	continue	1.24	do	1.97
5	building	1.12	join	1.97
6	held	1.12	serve	1.97
7	live	1.01	brought	1.48
8	build	0.90	continue	1.48
9	launched	0.90	contribute	1.48
10	pushed	0.90	keep	1.48
11	remain	0.90	love	1.48
12	shared	0.90	remember	1.48
13	keep	0.79	come together	0.98
14	make	0.79	get	0.98
15	safeguard	0.79	carry	0.98
16	visited	0.79	cherish	0.98
17	achieved	0.68	created	0.98
18	remember	0.68	deserve	0.98
19	see	0.68	fighting	0.98
20	attended	0.56	fix	0.98

As shown in Table 1, there are some verbs collectively used in the English translation of Chinese New Year Greetings and American New Year Greetings, such as "make", "keep", and "continue", which feature outstanding grammatical functions according to relevant collocation lines. For example, "make efforts", "made achievements/contributions", "keep doing", and "continue to do" are common collocations. They are usually used together with "we" as the subject, which shortens the distance between the speaker and the public. Besides, "make" is always used in the past tense to summarize the achievements made in the past year, while "keep" and "continue" are mostly paired with "will" in the future tense, reflecting a national image of pursuing development and progress.

In terms of differences, such verbs as "live", "work", "build", "launch", and "push" are more frequently used in Chinese discourse, which usually exist in a context related to concrete activities. For example, "live a better/happier life", "guarantee basic living conditions", "build a moderately well-off society in an all-around way", and "launch Chang'e-4 lunar probe". The past tense is usually used to look back on achievements, while the future tense is to look forward to the future. Besides, there are verbs inferring a situation to be improved, which reflect a national image of striving to be better. For example, "work as a team" and "push for reform".

4.1.2 High-frequency nouns and national image

The top 20 high-frequency nouns in the translation of Chinese New Year Greetings as well as American New Year Greetings are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Top 20 high-frequency nouns

No.	Translation of Chinese New Year Greetings		American New Year Greetings	
	Nouns	Frequency (‰)	Nouns	Frequency (‰)
1	people	13.38	people	6.89
2	year	8.88	Asian	4.92
3	China	8.54	everyone	3.94
4	Chinese	5.28	work	3.94
5	world	4.83	world	3.94
6	development	3.93	families	3.44
7	poverty	3.26	health	3.44
8	reform	2.92	prosperity	2.95
9	country	2.81	story	2.95
10	efforts	2.70	chance	2.46
11	friends	2.25	family	2.46
12	work	1.80	Pacific	2.46
13	peace	1.80	strength	2.46
14	lives	1.69	system	2.46
15	countries	1.57	communities	1.97
16	society	1.57	contributions	1.97
17	achievements	1.46	happiness	1.97
18	anniversary	1.46	immigration	1.97
19	Beijing	1.35	kids	1.97
20	community	1.35	opportunity	1.97

As shown in Table 2, there are some nouns collectively used in the English translation of Chinese New Year Greetings and American New Year Greetings, such as "people", "world", and "work". Considering the main audience, "people" is high-frequently used, such as "the Chinese people", "people of all ethnic groups", "people across the United States", and "people from all different backgrounds". Besides, speakers also greeted people abroad, as seen in "extend New Year wishes to Chinese people of all ethnic groups and to friends all over the world", "send my warm greetings to those in the United States and around the world", etc., which can also account for the high-frequent use of "world". In terms of a summary of the past and prospects for the future, "work" is commonly used, such as "these achievements are all thanks to the hard work from people", "we will work tirelessly", "the result of your hard work", and "our work isn't finished".

Different from American discourse, such words as "development", "poverty", "reform", and "efforts" are more frequently used in Chinese discourse, which is usually in accordance with the concerned issues of the country. For example, according to related collocations, "development" is usually collocated with "peace", "community", and "shared future", and "friend" is usually used together with "all countries" and "world", which reflect a national image of pursuing peace and development, as well as openness and friendliness. Besides, "reform", "society", "poverty", and "lives" are frequently seen in such expressions as "further deepen reform and expand opening-up with greater courage", "establish a moderately prosperous society in all respects", and "win the battle of poverty alleviation". In addition, "efforts" and "achievements" are frequently used in both past and future tense, as seen in "cheer for glorious achievements", "made new outstanding achievements", "put forth the efforts", etc. They represent the country's development orientation, reflecting a national image of being people-centred and hardworking.

4.1.3 Key words and national image

With CROWN Corpus (Xu & Liang, 2011) as a reference corpus, the key word lists of Chinese New Year Greetings translation and American New Year Greetings are made. Table 3 shows the words of the top 50 keyness.

Table 3. Top 50 key words

No.	Translation of Chinese New Year Greetings		American New Year Greetings	
	Key words	**Keyness**	**Key words**	**keyness**
1	China	+416.45	our	+177.2
2	people	+324.86	lunar	+146.68
3	we	+322.88	year	+144.88
4	our	+289.2	we	+83.93
5	Chinese	+275.71	Americans	+83.78
6	year	+192.01	celebrating	+78.54
7	poverty	+169.67	Asian	+77.09
8	comrades	+111.72	new	+64.36
9	development	+111.05	prosperity	+48.27
10	reform	+107.02	America	+45.08
11	all	+103.1	happy	+42.29
12	motherland	+99.82	've	+42.15
13	efforts	+98.17	Melania	+41.47
14	achievements	+92.8	us	+40.8
15	wish	+79.14	celebrate	+36.29
16	prosperous	+77.39	pacific	+34.81
17	anniversary	+76.81	gatherings	+34.74
18	world	+72.62	islanders	+34.74
19	Beijing	+72.25	welcoming	+34.47
20	moderately	+70.47	everyone	+32.57
21	will	+69.68	warmest	+31.92
22	rural	+69.64	families	+31.9
23	province	+67.79	fireworks	+30.72
24	new	+64.38	country	+28.4
25	peace	+63.98	islander	+27.65
26	forward	+62.54	happiness	+27.51
27	wishes	+61.43	strength	+27.37
28	country	+58.13	send	+26.76
29	friends	+55.29	contributions	+26.73
30	mankind	+52.18	nation	+25.97
31	regions	+52.04	traditions	+25.88
32	happiness	+49.27	immigration	+25.49
33	safeguard	+48.75	stronger	+22.74
34	nation	+48.69	people	+22.68
35	comprehensively	+47.38	together	+22.07
36	many	+46.51	ahead	+21.43
37	great	+46.26	folks	+21.42
38	cooperation	+46.00	story	+20.3
39	extend	+45.26	heritage	+20.23
40	prosperity	+45.22	cherish	+20.02
41	alleviation	+43.51	parades	+20.02
42	hardships	+43.51	eight	+19.5
43	lives	+41.16	yours	+19.38
44	greetings	+40.56	serve	+19.35
45	past	+40.45	chance	+19.1
46	sincerely	+39.28	join	+18.39
47	ethnic	+38.73	communities	+17.96
48	society	+38.17	all	+17.45
49	ahead	+37.61	always	+16.62
50	deepening	+36.21	contribute	+15.82

As shown in table 3, there are such key words as "people", "we", "our", "year", "all", "new", "country", "happiness", "nation", "prosperity", shared by the English translation of Chinese New Year Greeting and American New Year Greetings, as seen in "underlie the strength and prosperity of our Nation", "let all the people in this country live in happiness", "create a beautiful future of greater prosperity and greater peace for mankind", etc. That reflects a national image of pursuing development. Besides, "year" and "new" conform to the context of New Year's Greetings. "We" and "our" shorten the distance between speakers and the audience. "All" plays a more grammatical role, mostly used together with nouns and adjectives, such as "all these", "all the people", "all that", and "we all".

As for the differences, there are some key words only shown in the translation of Chinese New Year Greetings, some of which overlap high-frequency words, representing the country's concerned issues. For example, "poverty", "rural", "prosperous", "development", "reform" and "lives" are related to people's life, poverty alleviation and social construction. "Peace", "cooperation", "world", "regions", "friends", and "mankind" reflect the country's development vision, as shown in "a community of shared future for mankind". Similarly, "achievements", "forward," and "efforts" demonstrate a country of real practice and solid work.

4.1.4 Modal operators and national image

The modal operators used in the English translation of Chinese New Year Greetings and American New Year Greetings are statistically shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Modal operators

Modality	Words	Translation of Chinese New Year Greetings Frequency (‰)	American New Year Greetings Frequency (‰)
High	must	1.24	0
	cannot	0.22	0
	have to	0.11	0
	need to	0.45	0
	Subtotal	2.02	0
Median	will	7.64	1.97
	should	1.57	0.49
	would	0.22	0
	wouldn't	0.11	0
	shall	0.79	0
	Subtotal	10.34	2.46
Low	can	1.69	0.98
	may	0.11	1.48
	could	0.22	0.49
	Subtotal	2.02	2.95
Total		14.39	5.41

According to Table 4, the number of modal verbs used in the English translation of Chinese New Year Greetings is 128 times, with a frequency of 14.39 per 1,000 words, which is higher than that of American New Year Greetings, 11 times, with a frequency of 5.41 per 1,000 words.

On the one hand, the total number of words in the English translation of the Chinese leader's New Year Greetings is larger than that of American New Year Greetings, so its total number of modal verbs is relatively higher; On the other hand, it reflects a clear attitude of the country leader. Among high modality verbs, "must" has the highest frequency. Among median ones, "will" is mostly used. "Can" is most high-frequently shown in low modality verbs. Based on related collocations, such as "must think for the people", "will continue to deepen the reform", and "can live a happier life", it can be seen that the speaker makes expressions in a clear way, reflecting a national image of pursuing development with determined efforts.
Specifically, compared with the other two kinds of modality verbs used in the translation of Chinese New Year Greetings, the frequency of median ones is the highest, which means that the tone of the speaker is relatively moderate and reflects a leader image of both politeness and authority.

4.2 "Process" level
4.2.1 Discourse production
Country leader's New Year Greetings as public discourse are official and authoritative. The corresponding translation is produced by translators. It is crucial to be faithful to original texts in order to reproduce the country's image objectively and fairly. Taking high-frequency words and key words as the starting point, this paper finds that the topics of the country's concern, such as "reform and opening up", "poverty alleviation", "moderately prosperous society", "peaceful development", and "international cooperation", are represented in the English translation. Besides, the speaker's tone is also embodied in the use of modal verbs in the translation discourse. Therefore, it can be seen that the translators are faithful to the original texts and help to shape the country's national image objectively.

4.2.2 Discourse dissemination
New Year Greetings can be watched on TV, radio, and the Internet, as well as on numerous news platforms, such as China Radio International, China Central Television, and China International Television, and there are also related news reports in the press, such as Xinhua, People's Daily, and China Daily, which achieve a strong communication effect.

4.2.3 Discourse reception
In terms of a domestic audience, 100 comments of the public from 2018-2021 on a country leader's New Year Greetings are randomly selected from the WeChat account of People's Daily, a representative press agency in China, and a high-frequency word list is generated in table 5, in order to explore the country's image in people's mind.

Table 5. High-frequency words in people's comments (2018-2021)

Words	Frequency (‰)
加油 (come on)	1
祖国 (motherland)	0.98
新年 (new year)	0.91
前行 (move forward)	0.89
幸福 (happiness)	0.88
加油干 (work hard)	0.86
初心 (original aspiration)	0.86
伟大 (great)	0.86
袖子 (sleeve)	0.84
不负 (live up to)	0.84
共同 (common)	0.82
人民 (people)	0.81
祝福 (blessings)	0.81
繁荣昌盛 (prosperity)	0.81
安康 (well-being)	0.80
快乐 (happy)	0.79
砥砺前行 (forge ahead)	0.79
迎接 (welcome)	0.78
美好 (nice)	0.78

Based on Table 5 and related collocations, there are praises, such as "cheers for the motherland and the nation", and ardent wishes, such as "continue to work together", "never forget our original aspiration", and "keep moving forward", and "roll up our sleeves and work with added energy". It shows that the New Year Greetings arouse a deep resonance and positive response from the public.

As for the international audience, there is also a response overseas as media make broadcasts globally. In 2018, scholars from the Asia-Pacific region and the U.S. media positively affirmed the country's efforts to improve "people's livelihood"; in 2020, U.S. journalists positively praised its achievements in poverty eradication; in 2021, international experts spoke highly of the country's development. It can be seen that the international community is impressed by the country's New Year Greetings, especially such topics as "people's well-being", "reform and opening up", and "poverty alleviation", which reflect a national image of wisdom.

4.3 "Socio-culture" level
Discourse reflects ideology, while ideology is influenced by social existence. In the same way, the discourse of the New Year Greetings reflects the country's development orientation embodied by principles and policies, which can be influenced by its actual conditions and cultural factors.

4.3.1 Actual conditions
The country's development choices are based on its actual conditions. China strives for development while adjusting its pace and making innovations. For example, since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, the country has advanced reform and opening up, in line with its own conditions and the world trend, which can account for the high frequency of "reform" and "opening-up" in the country's New Year Greetings. As the country continuously promotes its modernization, "a moderately prosperous society", "poverty alleviation", and "rural revitalization" are frequently mentioned in the discourse. Besides, with the deepening of globalization, the country pursues peace and development, to which the high frequency of "friends", "cooperation", and "global community" can be attributed.

4.3.2 History and culture
Social culture and values influence a country's development orientation. Chinese cultural tradition has four basic concepts: "harmony between humanity and nature", "people-centred development", "self-reliance and vigour", and "peace and harmony" (Zhang, 2003). The basis of the country's development orientation embodied in the New Year Greetings can be found in the country's cultural traditions. For example, the idea of harmony between humanity and nature reflects the development concept of integrity, which can be seen in its support for international cooperation and its coordinated development between rural and urban areas. The people-centred orientation influences the country's commitment to doing everything for the people as well as its fundamental purpose of wholeheartedly serving the people. The spirit of self-reliance and vigour can be reflected in the country's pursuit of deepening reform and opening up across the board and promoting common prosperity for all. The concept of "peace and harmony" can be seen in the country's pursuit of peace and development, such as an international community with a shared future.

Besides, cultural traditions also influence a speaker's speech style, which can be adapted to a certain context and communicative purpose (Gao, 1963). The speech style can be evaluated from two sides, the distance between speaker and audience, as well as the speaker's attitude towards a proposition. As for New Year Greetings, the speech style of the country's leader can be perceived by the audience, through which a national image can be generated. For example, "we" and "our" draw the distance close between the leader and the public, and the modal verbs of median modality help the leader maintain a moderate tone. It can be seen that the country enjoys good governance and social harmony.

4.3.3 Development orientation
The country's actual conditions and cultural traditions contribute to its development choices, which influence people's perception of the country. Such objectives as "reform and opening up" and "peace and development" reflect the country's pursuit of development and cooperation.

5. Conclusion
This study was carried out to investigate the building of China's national image in the English translation of the country leader's New Year Greetings. Based on Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis model; the results show that a national image of enjoying good governance and social harmony, striving for people's happiness and nation's rejuvenation, and pursuing peace and development as well as international cooperation, is reflected in the discourse, as embodied in the use of high-frequency words, key words and modal operators. As for the factors contributing to that, translators' faithfulness to original texts and the media's role in information dissemination are crucial. Besides, socio-cultural factors, including the country's actual conditions, development orientation, and cultural traditions, pave the foundation.

However, it's worth mentioning that the research data of the study can be further expanded. This paper only collected the English translation of the country leader's New Year Greetings from 2014 to 2021, and the research findings need expansion. In future research, more discourse after 2021 can be followed up as time advances. Also, it is advisable to go back to the previous New Year Greetings before 2014 in order to get a more comprehensive picture of national image construction from a diachronic and comparative perspective.

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