Translation and Communication of Chinese People-Oriented Culture — A Corpus-based Study on the Translation History of the Chinese Concept *Min Ben Zhu Yi* 民本主义

Jiayao Fan

School of English Studies, Shanghai International Studies University,
Wenxiang Road, Shanghai, China. Email: 495010657@qq.com

Abstract

The Chinese concept min ben zhu yi, though born in the 1920s, was translated and introduced to the United States till the 1980s, and after 2000 it fully came into public view. At the early stage, the translation of min ben zhu yi 民本主义 was not uniform. It was not until 2017 that its authoritative translation "people-oriented" was determined. Before that, the Western concept of "humanism" was often borrowed for translation, which resulted in a deviation in meaning. After being introduced to the United States, min ben zhu yi 民本主义 was influenced by "humanism" in local culture while influencing it. Due to the misunderstanding in the Western world, the meaning of min ben zhu yi 民本主义 underwent variation and re-variation, which aggravated the misuse of humanism.

Keywords: *Min Ben Zhu Yi; People-Oriented Culture; Translation and Communication; Corpus-Based Study; Translation History of Concept.*

INTRODUCTION

As an important Confucian idea, the people-oriented (*min ben* 民本) thought has been the main guiding principle in maintaining national security and stability. The people-oriented (*min ben* 民本) culture was first mentioned in *Shang Shu* 尚书 in the Zhou Daynasty, with the statement "*min wei bang ben, ben gu bang ning.* 民为邦本，本固邦宁。(The people are the foundation of a country and only when the people lead a good life can the country survive.)" Later *The Works of Mencius* 孟子 said "*min wei gui, she ji ci zhi, jun wei qing.* 民为贵，社稷次之，君为轻。(The people are the most important element in a state; next are gods of land and grain; least is the ruler himself.)" And later in *The Book of Rites* 礼记, it was stated that "*min yi jun wei xin, jun yi min wei ben.* 民以君为心，军以民为本。(To the people the ruler is as their heart; to the ruler the people are as their body.)" President Xi Jinping also cited in *the Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China*, "*zhi guo you chang, li min wei ben.* 治国有常，利民为本。(There are some fixed principles in governing a state, among which benefiting the people should be the root.)"

The importance that China attaches to "people" can also be testified in the research on political discourse. Hu and Tian (2018), by comparing the high-frequency words in the English translation of China's reports on the work of the government and in the State of the Union Addresses from 2000 to 2016, found that the word "people" appeared 1,039 times (42.41 times

per 10,000 words) in the former while 409 times (39.9 times per 10,000 words) in the latter. Liu and Wei (2015), by comparing the top fifteen high-frequency words in *China Daily* and Western newspapers, found that the frequency of "people" is 0.32 per cent in the former and 0.19 per cent in the latter. Both show that "people" is one of the keywords in Chinese political discourse. Keyword analysis can describe a certain type of discourse and help identify the trajectory of the discourse (Baker 2004). As the keyword in Chinese diplomatic discourse, "people" is the major focus of China.

However, although the culture of *min ben* 民本 is deeply rooted in China, the concept of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 didn't appear until the modern era. *zhu yi* 主义, a Chinese classical word that originally referred to adherence to one's moral principle or maintenance, was used by Kato Hiroyuki during the Meiji period as the translation of "principle"; *zhu yi* 主义, with its new meaning, was then introduced into China in the late Qing Dynasty (Nie 2023). Since then, numerous expressions with *zhu yi* 主义 came into existence, including *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义. In 1917, Li Dazhao used *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 as a loanword equivalent to the Western concept of "democracy"; and in 1922, Liang Qichao brought *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 back to the Chinese context, specifically referring to the idea of people being more important than the ruler; since then, the meaning of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 has become increasingly Confucian (Lv 2018).

The official translation of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 by China Foreign Languages Publishing Administration is "people-oriented", which means that today *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 is the Chinese concept with Confucian culture instead of the simple translation of "democracy". From "democracy" to "people-oriented", has the translation and meaning of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 undergone diachronic evolution?

Translation is for the communication among people of different cultures (Xu 2020:10). When a translated concept is introduced into another culture, its original meaning may experience loss, mutation and reconstruction (Zhu and Qin 2018; Zhu 2023). There will be no exception when the term *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 and its translation are introduced into the Western discourse. Therefore, this paper uses the CNKI dictionary[1], a large-scale C-E parallel corpus based on China National Knowledge Infrastructure, to explore the translation history of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义.

Besides, COHA (Corpus of Historical American English)[2] and COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English)[3] are used as reference corpora to examine the evolution in the meaning of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 in Western discourse. In this way, this paper intends to answer two questions:

1) From "democracy" to "people-oriented", what evolution has happened to the translation of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义?

2) Since the introduction of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 into the Western world, what has been lost, mutated or reconstructed in its meaning?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the "eastward transmission of western sciences", various new concepts concerning science and technology, politics, social humanities etc., have been translated into Chinese, which is called "conceptual travelling" through translation (Said 1983: 226-227, cited in Li and Hu 2023). As a result, many scholars adopted the research methods used in the research of conceptual history, exploring the translation history of concepts that are important to modern China (Lackner 2001).

Concepts that are important to modern China should include both foreign and Chinese concepts. But up till now most scholars have examined the translation history of foreign concepts into Chinese. Some of these concepts are concerned with philosophy, culture, and medicine, such as Einfühlung and Sympathie (Zhang 2023), Red Cross (Zou 2018), civilization and culture (Huang 2017), and virus-related concepts (Miu 2022). But most are concerned with politics, such as president (Li and Hu 2023), hegemony (Li 2021), parliament, democracy, republic (Fang 2000), and humanism (Zhang 2016).

The translation history of Chinese concepts into other languages has been researched by rare scholars, and so has the concept of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义. For the concept of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义, some scholars examined its conceptual history, namely the evolution of its meaning (Guo 2011; Ma 2009; Ou 2010). For the translation history of the concept *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义, some scholars explore its history from the perspective of "democracy", namely the generation history of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义(Tan 2004; Feng 2019). Research on the translation history of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 when it became a Chinese concept with obvious Confucian culture is scarce.

Translation History of *Min Ben Zhu Yi* 民本主义

Since there are few C-E parallel corpora, this paper retrieves and classifies the translation of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 based on the CNKI dictionary (see **Table 1**).

There are nine categories of translations of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 — translations related to "people-oriented"(16), humanism(11), populism(8), translations related to "democracy"(5), translations related to "people-based"(4), translations related to "people-centre"(4), people fundamentalism(1), capitalism(1), and plebeianism(1), with frequency from high to low.

The first three categories, with high frequency, are the most popular and accepted translations concerning *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义; the next three, with moderate frequency, won a place although not dominant; and the last three, with low frequency, are scarcely mentioned.

As mentioned before, the authoritative translation of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 is "people-oriented", so it's understandable that translations related to "people-oriented" are of the highest frequency; and as the source of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义, "democracy" related translations' moderate frequency is also normal. But why are there other translations with moderate and

even high frequency? The translation of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 was confirmed and officially publicized in 2017, before which translators could only refer to their understanding and previous translations.

Table 1: Translations of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 in CNKI

Translation		Frequency	Total	Translation		Frequency	Total
Related to "people-oriented"	people-oriented	8	16	Related to "people-centre"	people-centralism	2	4
	people-oriented doctrine	6			people-centrism	1	
	people-oriented principle	1			people-centred doctrine	1	
	people-oriented ideology	1		Related to "democracy"	democracy	4	5
humanism		11	11		democratism	1	
Related to "people-based"	people-based ideology	1	4	populism		8	8
	people-based doctrine	1		people fundamentalism		1	1
	people-based principle	1		capitalism		1	1
	people-based ism	1		plebeianism		1	1

As there are several versions concerning the translation of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义, this paper then, this study used the spaCy model in natural language processing to calculate the semantic similarity between the authoritative translation of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义, "people-oriented" and other translations, with the former as the reference (see **Table 2**).

According to Table 2, translations with high similarity to people-oriented (i.e., similarity greater than 0.5) include expressions related to "people-oriented" (with semantic similarity ranging from 0.88 to 1.00), expressions related to "people-based" (with semantic similarity ranging from 0.75 to 0.80), expressions related to "people-center" (with semantic similarity ranging from 0.65 to 0.78), and people fundamentalism (with the semantic similarity of 0.53).

The first three expressions with higher similarity also have higher frequency; the fourth type is moderately similar to "people-oriented" with a lower frequency of use.

However, it should be noted that, in addition to the first three, although humanism, populism, and democracy are frequently used, their semantic similarity with "people-oriented" is relatively low, at 0.13, 0.07, and 0.32, respectively.

This shows significant semantic differences among the frequently used translations of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义. Moreover, the semantic similarity between "democracy" and "people-oriented" is only 0.32, which indirectly confirms that the semantics of "people-oriented" have indeed undergone significant changes after returning to the Chinese context.

Table 2: Semantic Similarities between Translations of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 and "people-oriented"

Translation		Semantic Similarity with "people-oriented"	Translation		Semantic Similarity with "people-oriented"
Related to "people-oriented"	people-oriented	1.00	Related to "people-centre"	people-centralism	0.65
	people-oriented doctrine	0.92		people-centrism	0.65
	people-oriented principle	0.91		people-centred doctrine	0.78
	people-oriented ideology	0.88	Related to "democracy"	democracy	0.32
humanism		0.13		democratism	nan
Related to "people-based"	people-based ideology	0.80	populism		0.07
	people-based doctrine	0.75	people fundamentalism		0.53
	people-based principle	0.80	capitalism		0.29
	people-based ism	0.78	plebeianism		nan

(Note: "nan" indicates that the word is not present in the spaCy model, therefore its similarity with people-oriented cannot be calculated)

Based on the sources of the translations in CNKI, this paper further examines the temporal distribution of the six categories of translations with moderate and high frequency, to explore the evolution of the main translation versions (see **Table 3**).

Table 3: Temporal Distribution of Main Translation Versions of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 in CNKI

Year	Translations related to "people-oriented"	humanism	populism	Translations related to "democracy"	Translations related to "people-based"	Translations related to "people-center"
2001					√	
2002				√		√
2003			√			
2004		√		√		
2005	√		√			√
2006	√	√		√	√	√
2007		√				
2008	√					
2009			√	√		
2010	√			√		
2011						
2012						
2013		√		√		
2014	√				√	
2015		√	√			
2016	√		√			√
2017	√	√				
2018			√			
2019		√				

(Note: The temporal distribution is based on the number of examples for each translation which is not equal to the frequency of each translation in Table 1.)

The earliest literature in CNKI can be traced back to 1915, but according to Table 2, the literature containing both *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 and its translation can only date back to 2001. It partly results from the literature in the early times lacking English titles, abstracts and keywords. It also shows that although the concept *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 boasts a history of more than a century, its translation, with a short history, has only been known to the public for about 20 years. In this way, despite the authoritative translation of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义, there are still various versions of its translation.

To be general, translations of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 feature parallel instead of alternate appearances over time. From 2001 to 2019, there are 11 years when at least two versions coexist. The translation can be divided into four phases: (1) Phase I, from 2001 to 2006, there was an increasing variety of translations which reached its peak in 2006, with the coexistence of five versions; (2) Phase II, from 2007 to 2012, the translation of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 hit the low point, with no more than two versions per year and even a "gap" from 2011 to 2012; (3) Phase III, from 2013 to 2017, the variety of translations revived, though fewer than that in Phase I, with two to three versions per year; (4) Phase IV, from 2018 to 2019, the translation receded again, with only one version per year.

To be specific, the tendency of different translations has become stronger or weaker over time. As the source word of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义, "democracy" related translations are widely used in Phase I, Phase II, and even 2013. But since 2014, they have no longer been the popular version. "People-based" related and "people-center" related versions, despite their usage, are used only occasionally. "People-oriented" related translations, humanism, and populism are the three versions with the highest frequency and widest distribution throughout the 19 years. But it should also be noted that since the release of "people-oriented" in 2017, translations of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 have not been unified and the three versions mentioned before are still popular. But none of these three versions appear continuously from 2001 to 2019. All have experienced a consecutive 3 to 5 years of gap in the 19 years. Therefore, despite the high popularity and acceptance of these three translations, their development is not stable.

To be more specific, not every translation can accurately convey the meaning of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义, especially the two influential versions — humanism and populism. In the Chinese context, *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 refers to the political value that the government should serve the people so that the people would wholeheartedly respect the government, featuring the idea of the world belonging to all and the people-oriented goal of exercising power in the interests of the people (Wang 2022). However, "humanism" and "populism", both western concepts, cannot precisely correspond to the Chinese concept. The former, according to the Longman Dictionary[4], when capitalized, namely "Humanism", originally refers to "the study during the Renaissance of the ideas of the ancient Greeks and Romans", based on which "humanism" means "the belief that human problems can be solved through science rather than religion". Clearly, different from *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义, "humanism" emphasizes the resolution of issues. The latter, according to the Collins Dictionary[5], refers to "political activities or ideas that claim to promote the interests and opinions of ordinary people". The related term "populist" in the Longman Dictionary is described as "relating to or representing

ordinary people, rather than rich or highly educated individuals". Also different from *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义, "populism" refers to specific instead of the general population.

In the past, Confucian thought was usually overwritten in translation. Confucian concepts were therefore transformed into ones heavily imbued with Christian characteristics and Confucian thought was degraded to a diluted and inferior version of Christianity (Liu 2017). Similarly, the translation of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 into "humanism" or "populism" tends to transform the Chinese concept into a Western one, consequently distorting its original meaning.

In summary, based on CNKI, it is found that *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 enjoys a long conceptual history, yet its translation history is comparatively brief. From 2001 to 2019, various translation versions coexisted. Even after the publication of the authoritative translation, its translation didn't achieve uniformity, with discontinuity occurring in each version. And among the popular versions, western concepts are usually borrowed, leading to inaccurate interpretations.

Since one of the prevalent versions is the Western concept of "humanism", here comes the question of whether the introduction of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 to the West has influenced or been influenced by it. And is there a risk of distortion of the meaning of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 due to its association with "humanism"? Subsequently, this paper utilizes COHA and COCA as reference corpora to investigate the contextual use of "people-oriented" in Western discourse to explore the possible diachronic changes in the interpretation of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 after its introduction.

Diachronic Changes of "People-oriented" in Western Discourse

The study then examines the term "people-oriented" in COHA and COCA to explore whether the meaning of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 has undergone diachronic changes since its introduction to the West. In this way, we can predict the reception and communication of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 in the West.

Semantic Reconstruction of "People-oriented" in COHA

In COHA, it is revealed that the frequency of "people-oriented" is only 21, with 4 in 1970-1980, 9 in 1980-1990, 4 in 1990-2000, and 4 in 2000-2010 (see **Table 4**). During 1970-2010, except for a higher frequency in 1980-1990, the frequency in other years was relatively balanced. According to CNKI, the translation of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 became popular in China after 2001. Therefore, two hypotheses can be proposed: (1) The concept of "people-oriented" already existed in American society as a derivative concept of "humanism". And *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 was translated as "people-oriented" around 2000, subsequently influencing the native meaning of "people-oriented" in the United States. (2) The CNKI database may not be complete enough, and "people-oriented" as the translation of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 entered the United States around 1970. But, influenced by "humanism" in the West, it gradually underwent semantic reconstruction. Consequently, this paper preliminarily divides the period of 1970-2010 into two parts: 1970-2000 and 2000-2010. Subsequently, the

paper examines whether there has been a diachronic change in the meaning of "people-oriented" in COHA based on the context, determining the specific temporal boundary of the change.

Table 4: Temporal Distribution of "People-oriented" in COHA

Period	Frequency	Period	Frequency	Period	Frequency	Period	Frequency
1970-1980	4	1980-1990	9	1990-2000	4	2000-2010	4

(Note: There is no "people-oriented" in 2010-2020 in COHA; hence, the table does not include the period.)

After contextual examination, the paper finds a noteworthy distinction between COHA and CNKI in the usage of "people-oriented". In CNKI, it primarily modifies terms like "ideology" and "principle". But in COHA, it mainly modifies persons or objects. And what is modified underwent a significant change around 1990. In 1970-1990, "people-oriented" was more commonly used to describe persons, as the opposite of "thing/object-oriented" (see **Example 1**). It occasionally modified animals (see **Example 2**), political beliefs (see **Example 3**), and political activities (see **Example 4**). However, from 1990-2010, "people-oriented" modified something more abstract, including learning styles (see **Example 5**), economic systems (see **Example 6**), and culture (see **Example 7**). Did this shift arise from the translation of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 as "people-oriented" which was used to describe political beliefs and activities, as seen in Example 3 and Example 4 in 1980-1990? To delve deeper into this issue, the study proceeds to provide a detailed analysis of the meaning of "people-oriented" in Example 3 to Example 7.

【Example 1】 He was a "**people-oriented**" person in an "object-oriented" job: ...

【Example 2】 Such animals have a strong tendency to be "**people-oriented**",...

【Example 3】 But Truman seemed never fully to shake off the woolly Rooseveltian philosophy which tended to see communism not as a tyrannical revival of the old world but as an advanced, **people-oriented** form of self-government.

【Example 4】 ..., our campaign must be more **people-oriented** and depend on grass-roots activities to get the message across," ...

【Example 5】 ..., Hale-Benson stated that African American children engage in **people-oriented** learning styles,...

【Example 6】 ..., and the **people-oriented** economy envisioned in Catholic social teaching would move one giant step closer to reality.

【Example 7】 It was a very **people-oriented**, very caring culture even back then.

（Selected from COHA）

In Example 3 and 4 (in 1980 and 1981 respectively), "people-oriented" was used to describe political beliefs and activities. Example 3 defined "communism" as an "advanced, people-oriented form of self-government". Example 4 showed that a "people-oriented

campaign" "must depend on grassroots activities to get the message across". Although the usage of "people-oriented" in Examples 3 and 4 was not entirely consistent with the Chinese concept of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义, it had already carried its feature and was highly possible to influence American culture. Thus, from 1990-2010, what was modified by "people-oriented" shifted from persons to objects.

In Examples 5, 6, and 7, "people-oriented" modifies respectively learning styles, economic systems, and cultural systems. The shift from political beliefs and activities to broader concepts such as systems and culture reflects not only the impact of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 on the Western concept of "people-oriented" but also the semantic reconstruction of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 in Western discourse. The reconstruction is partly influenced by the culture of humanism in the West. *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 is the people-oriented thought while "humanism" is the human-oriented one. In the Chinese context, there's little semantic difference between *min* 民 and "human". However, although both can be called "people" in a Western context, the distinction between the two exists. The former is relative to "official" while the latter is relative to "god". Therefore, *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 emphasizes the fundamental role of people while "humanism" highlights the existence and nature of human beings (Li 2014). In this way, the former is primarily used in the context of national governance, while the latter covers a wider range of social interactions in areas including politics, law, morality, religion, and industries (Zhang 2009). And when "people-oriented" with the idea of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 was introduced to the West, it would be naturally connected to "humanism" as the word "people" couldn't tell the difference between "*min*" and "human". "People-oriented" thought, was not just viewed as a governance tool but was applied to various aspects of life. Thus, "humanism", as the second widely adopted translation for *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义, is both the cause and the result of the misunderstanding.

In summary, based on COHA, this study speculates that the term "people-oriented" originally is a native concept in the United States. Around 1980 (the exact time remains unknown), the translation of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 as "people-oriented" was introduced. It was initially used to modify political beliefs or activities. However, over time, what was modified by "people-oriented" shifted from persons to more abstract objects such as culture and systems. The semantic construction is not only the influence of "people-oriented" on Western culture but also the influence of humanism culture on "people-oriented". However, with the limited data from COHA, especially the absence of information on the usage of "people-oriented" between 2010 and 2020, drawing definitive conclusions based solely on COHA might be premature. Consequently, this study proceeds to examine the semantic evolution of "people-oriented" in contemporary English through COCA.

Semantic Reconstruction of "People-oriented" in COCA

Similarly, in COCA, it is found that the frequency of "people-oriented" is 73[6], with 35 in 1990-2000, 20 in 2000-2010, and 18 in 2010-2020 (see **Table 4** and **Figure 1**). Compared with the data in COHA, those in COCA are more detailed, which makes the semantic reconstruction of "people-oriented" in contemporary contexts more likely to be revealed.

According to Table 5 and Figure 1, the frequency of "people-oriented" remains stable in 2000-2020, in contrast to the higher frequency observed in 1990-2000, which deviates slightly from the data in COHA.

Throughout these thirty years, apart from the remarkable increase in the frequency of "people-oriented" in 1996 and 2012, the frequency in other years has maintained a moderate and even low level. Based on the earlier speculation, "people-oriented" with the thought of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 entered the West and started to be applied to various aspects of life after 1990. Consequently, this paper continues to examine the context of "people-oriented" in COCA to validate the assumption.
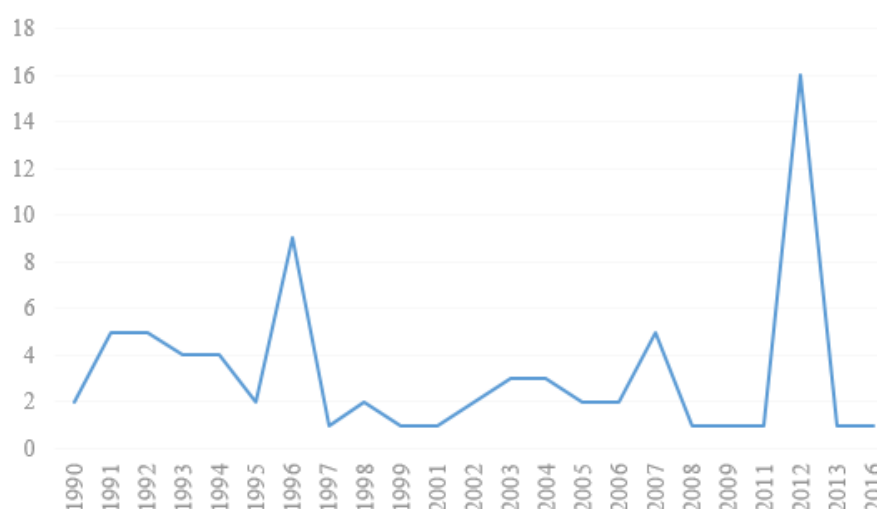

Figure 1: Frequency of "People-oriented" (1990-2020) in COCA

Table 5: Temporal Distribution of "People-oriented" in COCA

Period		Frequency		Period		Frequency		Period		Frequency	
	1990	2			2000	/			2010	/	
	1991	5			2001	1			2011	1	
	1992	5			2002	2			2012	15	
	1993	4			2003	3			2013	1	
	1994	4	35		2004	3			2014	/	18
1990-2000	1995	2		2000-2010	2005	2	20	2010-2020	2015	/	
	1996	9			2006	2			2016	1	
	1997	1			2007	5			2017	/	
	1998	2			2008	1			2018	/	
	1999	1			2009	1			2019	/	

(Note: "/" means that in this period there's no "people-oriented".)

In the earlier contextual examination in COHA, it is observed that what's modified by "people-oriented" shifted from persons to more abstract objects. Therefore, the paper again focuses on what's modified by "people-oriented" (see **Table 6**).

From Table 5, it is evident that the frequency of persons modified by "people-oriented" is relatively low in both 1990-2000 and 2000-2010, but the frequency in the latter is lower than the one in the former. It highlights the trend of "people-oriented" being used to modify more abstract objects, consistent with the conclusion drawn according to COHA.

However, COCA shows that in 2010-2020, the frequency of "people-oriented" used to modify persons increased again. In the decade, close to half of the instances of "people-oriented" were used to modify persons, with a regressive growth, which is not available in COHA.

Nevertheless, even though it was more frequently used to modify persons again in 2010-2020, it is crucial to analyze specific cases to determine whether this indicates a regression in its meaning. Then the paper gives a deeper exploration through case analysis.

Table 6: Comparison between Persons and Objects Modified by "People-oriented" in COCA

Period	Frequency	For Persons	Ratio	For Objects	Ratio
1990-2000	35	11	31.43%	24	68.57%
2000-2010	20	5	25%	15	75%
2010-2020	18	8	44.44%	10	55.56%
Total	73	24	32.88%	49	67.12%

As mentioned before, in 1970-1990, "people-oriented" in COHA, primarily as the opposite of "object-oriented", represented a broad contrast between people and objects. However, in 2010-2020, "people-oriented" in COCA, when used to modify people, was the opposite of "object-oriented" (see **Example 8**), "task-oriented" (see **Example 9**), and "party-oriented" (see **Example 10**). In addition to "objects", the opposite meaning of people, which was "task" and "party", was further narrowed down. So it can be inferred that in 2010-2020, further influenced by the local culture of "humanism", "people-oriented" gradually exhibited a regression in meaning, frequently used to modify people again, and its semantic range became more specific and detailed. Given the specification in the meaning of "people-oriented" when it was used to modify people in 2010-2020, the question of whether specification also occurred to objects arises. The paper then further explores it.

【Example 8】There doesn't seem to be any more evidence for that than there was for the idea that women are **people-oriented** and men are object-oriented.

【Example 9】... Person A is more task-oriented and independent, and Person B is more **people-oriented** and seeks team input before any decisions are solidified?

【Example 10】I'm not party-oriented, I'm **people-oriented**.

（Selected from COCA）

As previously mentioned, according to COHA, from 1990-2010, "people-oriented" began to be more frequently used to modify concepts such as learning styles, economic systems, and culture. In COCA, during the same period (1990-2010), similar modifications are observed (see **Example 11** and **Example 12**). However, compared to the contexts in COHA, what was modified by "people-oriented" in COCA appears more diverse in range, including technology (see **Example 13**), media (see **Example 14**), government (see **Example 15**) etc. Besides, from 2010 to 2020, there was a trend of specification of what was modified by "people-oriented" which was used to modify work (see **Example 16**), solutions (see **Example 17**), documents (see **Example 18**) etc. Therefore, 2010-2020 witnessed a tendency of further refinement in the modification of persons and objects by "people-oriented" which permeated various aspects of life. The phenomenon appears to be widespread during this period and can be viewed as the

further transformation and recontextualization of "people-oriented" influenced by local culture after its "first round of" semantic reconstruction.

【Example 11】..., with the number of productive workers employed-the current antagonism between workers and Wall Street would subside, and the **people-oriented** economy envisioned in Catholic social teaching would move one giant step closer to reality.

【Example 12】It was a very **people-oriented**, very caring culture even back then.

【Example 13】... that would extend the "existing situation" and create a new "man/machine relationship", a "**people-oriented** technology".

【Example 14】A more **people-oriented** press, television, and even the Internet are changing the ways single Chinese meet each other, at least in larger cities.

【Example 15】, but we are not a **people-oriented** government.

【Example 16】And as someone whom has worked in customer service, and other people-oriented jobs, I'm trained to just say yes.

【Example 17】Don't depend entirely on **people-oriented** solutions.

【Example 18】..., the iel has launched a long-term action plan aiming at **people-oriented** documentation.

（Selected from COCA）

However, with the continuous refinement of what "people-oriented" modified, its meaning gradually deviated from its original one, which occurred not only to the foreign concept of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 but also to the local concept of "people-oriented". Whether it is the changes in the meaning of the Western humanism concept of "people-oriented" after the introduction of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 from China, or the semantic transformation of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 introduced to the West and influenced by the local culture of humanism, both instances represent the generalization and analogization of conceptual meanings in the popularization of buzzwords. In this process, the semantic meaning becomes more abstract, covering a broader range of content while gaining new meanings radiantly (Yin 2012).

In summary, through the contextual examination of "people-oriented" in COHA and COCA, this study reveals its semantic reconstruction. Originally, "people-oriented" was initially a form of "humanism" thought in the West, predominantly used to describe individuals. However, with the introduction of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 from China in the 1980s, "people-oriented" was gradually used to modify abstract objects. Initially, similar to *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义, it specifically referred to political beliefs and campaigns. But later the influence of local humanism culture led "people-oriented" to be applied to various aspects of life. With the further impact of humanism culture, "people-oriented" resumed being used to modify people. And what was modified by "people-oriented", both people and objects, became more specific.

On the other hand, simultaneous to the introduction of "people-oriented", another popular but incorrect translation of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义, namely "humanism", also participated in its communication. It can be inferred therefore that the mistranslation led to a misunderstanding of the concept in the West. With the influence of "humanism" in the West, "people-oriented" underwent semantic transformation and reconstruction, deviating from its original meaning and exacerbating the misuse of "humanism".

DISCUSSION

min ben zhu yi 民本主义 is a unique concept, initially carrying the shell of Chinese characters but conveying the meaning of Western democracy. However, there has been relatively little research on the re-translation of the concept back to the West after its integration with Chinese traditional culture. This paper utilizes the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database, with Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) and Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) as reference corpora, to examine the translation history of the concept of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 after its return to the Chinese context and the semantic evolution after the introduction of its authoritative translation "people-oriented" to the west. Then a timeline of the translation and communication of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 can be constructed (see **Figure 2**).

Figure 2: Timeline of Translation and Communication of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义

The paper suggests that the concept of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 in China emerged in the 1920s, but its translation and introduction to the United States occurred around the 1980s, gaining widespread attention after 2000. However, early translations of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 were not consistent, and the authoritative translation "people-oriented" was established in 2017. Before that, there were instances of borrowing the Western concept of "humanism" for its translation, leading to a deviation from its actual meaning. Additionally, after its introduction to the United States, while influencing the local culture, it was also influenced by "humanism". Due to the misunderstanding in the West, its semantic meaning underwent transformations and further variations, exacerbating the misuse of "humanism".

It is common for foreign concepts to be influenced by local culture in the process of translation. The translation of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 is just one example. When foreign concepts are translated into Chinese, similar situations may also arise. For instance, Rousseau's "born equal" translated into Chinese as *sheng er ping deng* 生而平等 reflects a transformation from transcendental value to empirical meaning under multiple cultural contexts. This kind of translation achieves formal equivalence but diverges significantly in essence (Zhao 2016).

This situation serves as a warning to translators. When translating an important concept, translators must establish the correct translations from the beginning to eliminate misleading factors. When a concept is translated and introduced, it will inevitably be influenced by local culture, resulting in a transformation of its meaning. The process of "looking at others' language and culture from one's language and culture", or mean-matching, though unavoidable, is still remediable through name-rectification – the re-examination and determination in conceptual translation (Pan 2017).

CONCLUSION

This paper examines the translation and communication of *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 from 1980 to 2020. However, since the concept can be traced back to the 1920s, its translation and communication in 1920-1980 are also possible. And when *min ben zhu yi* 民本主义 influenced and was influenced by "humanism" in the Western culture, it remains to be explored whether "humanism" also underwent semantic reconstruction. These questions require further research in the future.

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Footnotes

1) See https://dict.cnki.net/index

2) See https://www.english-corpora.org/coha/

3) See https://www.english-corpora.org/coca

4) See https://www.ldoceonline.com/

5) See https://www.collinsdictionary.com/zh/

6) There is a mistake in the frequency of "people-oriented" in COCA. The right frequency is 73.

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