

# Study of Political Document Translation from the Perspective of Eco-translatology: Taking the Report on the Work of the Government from 2019 to 2023 as an Example

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**Abstract.** In recent years, China has made many breakthrough achievements in all aspects and gradually moved towards the center of the world stage. At the same time, it is particularly important to do a good job in publicity so that more people can clearly understand China's political stance and characteristic culture. In China, the Report on the Work of the Government is an important way for us to carry out international publicity work, and its English version plays an irreplaceable role in international publicity work. Based on the theory of eco-translatology, this study takes the Chinese and English versions of the Government Work Report from 2019 to 2023 as an example to explore how to show self-confidence in the translation of international publicity represented by political documents and achieve the purpose of cross-cultural communication. It is found that translators often choose translation strategies such as free translation, omitted translation, combined translation and annotation to realize the adaptive choice of translation in three dimensions: language, culture and communication, so as to promote the full communication between the source culture and the target culture and construct a foreign discourse system with Chinese characteristics. This paper aims to enrich the study of political documents from the perspective of the eco-translatology theory, with a view to providing reference for the localization of political documents.

**Keywords:** Report on the Work of the Government; Eco-translatology; Three-dimensional Transformation; Translation Strategy.

## 1. Introduction

Publicity work satisfies the needs of the Party and the country's external propaganda, accurately and deeply publicizes China's major strategic thoughts and strategic arrangements, and reflects China's achievements in economic, political, cultural and ecological civilization construction. Meanwhile, the publicity work is an important window for people all over the world to know about China, which is of great strategic significance for strengthening exchanges between China and foreign countries and promoting friendly cooperation (Shu & Yu, 2017). Translation of political documents is an indispensable part of publicity work. In the international publicity work, we rely on the translation of political documents to build our national image, and enhance China's position in the international arena. At present, the existing translation studies of political documents in China are mostly based on corpus construction, teleology, domestication and foreignization, and there are few translation studies of political documents from the perspective of eco-translatology theory.

Eco-translatology was proposed in Hu Gengshen in 2001. This theory systematically explains the adaptation and choice in translation, and puts forward requirements for the translator's translation process. Its core is the adaptive transformation of three dimensions: language dimension, culture dimension and communication dimension, which provides a new agenda for the research and development of translation studies. The *Report on the Work of the Government* is a unique official document form for Chinese government agencies to report their work to people's congresses. Based on this, from the perspective of eco-translatology theory, this paper analyzes the English translation strategies of the *Report on the Work of the Government* (hereinafter referred to as the *Report*) from 2019 to 2023 through typical translation cases, providing a new research direction for the English translation of political documents from the perspective of eco-translatology, effectively spreading the

voice of China and strengthening exchanges between China and foreign countries, and enhancing the country's development.

## **2. An Overview of Eco-translatology**

### **2.1. Eco-translatology**

With the help of isomorphic metaphor of translation ecology and natural ecology, ecological holism, integration of oriental ecological wisdom, and based on the theory of adaptation and choice, eco-translatology theory systematically explores the harmonious ecological construction of text, translator and translation ecological environment, forming concrete and comprehensive research results in translation process, translation principles, translation methods and evaluation criteria, and boosting the ecological balance in the field of translation (Hu, 2009). This theory analyses the explanatory function of the theory of translation adaptation and choice for translated texts: (1) the translation process: the alternating cycle process of translator's adaptation and translator's choice; (2) translation principle: multi-dimensional selective adaptation and adaptive selection; (3) translation method: three-dimensional transformation (linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension); (4) translation evaluation: criteria-multi-dimensional conversion degree, reader feedback and translator's quality (Hu, 2008).

The translation methods proposed in eco-translatology mainly focus on the adaptive selection and transformation of three dimensions: linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension. The adaptive selection and transformation of the linguistic dimension refers to the translator's transformation of the source language and the target language from different angles in the translation process. The adaptive selection and transformation of cultural dimension refers to the translator's balancing the differences between the source language and the target culture in the translation process, paying attention to the transmission and exchange of bilingual cultures, and finding the resonance between bilingual cultures. The communicative dimension refers to the translator's full reproduction of the communicative intention of the source language text in the translation process.

### **2.2. Eco-translatology Research**

Eco-translatology is not only limited to theoretical discussion, but also related applied research is widely carried out in different fields. The previous research fields of eco-translatology can be roughly divided into five aspects: literary translation, text translation of international publicity, translation of public signs, scientific text translation, and cultural translation. For example, in the study of literary translation, Yang et al. (2022) started from the perspective of green translation, based on translation practice, selected typical translation cases, and analyzed the work *Once There Were Wolves* from the perspective of adaptive selection and transformation in three dimensions: linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension. They explored how to effectively use translation techniques and translation theories to achieve a balanced transformation between source language and target language, and applied green values to the translation process for literary text translation research. In terms of the translation of international publicity, Xia (2022) provided opinions and suggestions on standardizing the translation of international publicity texts from the perspectives of prevention in advance, feedback from readers and punishment after the translation process by analyzing the English translation of international publicity texts of red tourism. The three policies interact with each other to promote the construction of a standardized system for the English translation of international publicity texts of red tourism, and provide guidance for related tourism translation research in the future.

To sum up, it can be seen that although the relevant applied research of eco-translatology is widely carried out, the translation research of political texts is rarely involved. Therefore, from the perspective of eco-translatology, this paper makes an in-depth analysis of English translation strategies of political documents by using the three-dimensional transformation theory of language,

culture and communication. In order to study more fully and thoroughly, this paper selects the *Report* from 2019 to 2023 in order to enrich the translation study of political documents and help build China's foreign discourse system.

### 3. Political Documents

Political documents mainly refer to the important speeches of the Party and state leaders, documents and work reports of the Party and government, and are authoritative documents with strong political color. Therefore, this document type has strong accuracy, timeliness and seriousness in language, content and style.

In terms of language, the main features of political documents are brief introduction and accuracy. Four-character words, political terms and abbreviations are used to convey the main content, and the syntactic structure is formed by combining sentences with long and short sentences, which makes the whole content of the text have a strong sense of rhythm, enhances the expressive power and appeal of the text, and better conveys political thoughts. With respect to content, political documents involve the country's political system, political stance, national interests, external image and external influence. This kind of literature is produced in a specific historical background, so it has timeliness in the text content level. In terms of writing style, political literature is close to all aspects of social life such as people's life, work and study, and has the characteristics of vivid image, easy to understand, unpretentious and grounded. Even serious political literature texts are full of expressions and rhetorical devices such as parallelism, metaphor, antithesis and repetition, which make the style of writing magnificent (Shu & Yu, 2017).

The *Report on the Work of the Government* is a unique official document form in People's Republic of China (PRC), an annual work report submitted by the government to the People's Congress, and an authoritative official document. It covers the completion of government agencies' tasks in the previous year, the work objectives, relevant measures and work priorities of this year. It is an important way for the government to be responsible for the people and accept their supervision. It also puts forward the future expectation of government work this year, which provides a certain guiding role for economic and social development. With the continuous improvement of China's international status and comprehensive national strength, more and more countries and regional organizations are eager to form a strategic partnership with China. Undoubtedly, the English translation of the *Report on the Work of the Government* is the first window to know China, an important way for us to publicize the national image and major policies, and also a significant means to spread Chinese culture and provide China with wisdom and plans.

## 4. Analysis of English Versions of the Report from 2019 to 2023 from the Perspective of Three-dimensional Transformation

### 4.1. Linguistic Dimension

The adaptive selection and transformation of linguistic dimension refers to the translator's adaptive selection and transformation between the source language and the target language by using different translation skills on the basis of understanding the source language, so as to adapt to the reading habits of the target language audience and realize the principle standard of faithfulness in the translation. This paper mainly analyzes the adaptive selection and transformation of the *Report* from 2019 to 2023 from the lexical and syntactic levels.

#### 4.1.1. Vocabulary Level

##### (1) Conversion of part of speech

Example 1 [The *Report* in 2023]

Original: 全面实施市场准入负面清单制度,

Translation: We broadened market access with full implementation of the negative list system.

On the part of speech, English is a static language, preferring nouns, while Chinese is a dynamic language, preferring verbs (Wei, 2022). In the English version of the *Report*, many words are expressed as verbs in Chinese. However, in the process of English translation, in order to adapt to the language habits of the target language, the translator gives full play to the subjective initiative to bring the differences between Chinese and English into the scope of eco-translation and change the verbs in Chinese into nouns. In Example 1, the word “实施” is a verb in Chinese, aiming at explaining the market access list system implemented by the state. If the translator is confined to the original text and does not change the part of speech in the process of translation, it will often cause the translation to be stiff and awkward, which is not in line with English writing habits and increases the reading burden of readers. In order to balance the linguistic differences between Chinese and English, the translator changes the verb “实施” in the source language into the noun “implementation” in the target language. After the retranslation, not only the differences between Chinese and English are skillfully mastered to ensure the fluency of the translation, but also the original meaning of “实施市场准入负面清单制度” in the original text is expressed, the purpose of being faithful to the original text is realized, the complete and accurate semantics are conveyed to readers, and the requirements of creating excellent translations are met.

## (2) Addition and translation of logical words

Example 2 [The *Report* in 2019]

Original: 实施稳投资举措，制造业投资、民间投资增速明显回升。

Translation: Measures were implemented to ensure stable investment; as a result, investment in manufacturing and private investment rebounded markedly.

Chinese belongs to Sino-Tibetan language family, and it is used to be expressed horizontally in the order of time, space and logic. The internal logical relationship of its text is containing but not revealing, scattered in form but not scattered in spirit and pays attention to parataxis; English belongs to the Indo-European language family, and is good at using logical words to connect various language components, with distinct and rigorous structure and emphasis on hypotaxis (Liu, 2020). Therefore, when translating such sentence patterns, the translator should pay attention to the inherent logical structure of the source language, and choose appropriate and appropriate logical words to connect the sentences to form a semantically complete and logically rigorous translation. Obviously, in Example 2, “制造业投资,民间投资增速明显” is the final result of “实施稳投资举措”. Therefore, in the English translation of this sentence, the translator chooses the logical word “as a result” to translate. With this logical word, the translator fully explains the significance of “实施稳投资举措”, shows the outstanding achievements made by the Chinese government in “制造业投资,民间投资”, and makes the translation rigorous in structure and clear in context.

## (3) Omission translation of category words

Example 3 [The *Report* in 2021]

Original: 加快数字社会建设步伐，提高数字政府建设水平，营造良好数字生态，建设数字中国。

Translation: We will work faster to develop a digital society, digital government, and healthy digital ecosystem as we pursue the Digital China initiative.

Category words are some general and decorative words in Chinese, which are usually used after specific words to classify and generalize them and continue the mood. In essence, category words are abstract nouns with no substantive meaning. In the process of translation, in order to make the meaning of the translated text clear and reduce the reading obstacles of the target language readers, the translation skills of omitting translation are usually adopted to omit the translation of category

words in the source language. In Example 3, the word “步伐和水平” in “加快数字化社会建设步伐，提高数字政府建设水平” belongs to the category words that express the generalization and modification of the construction of a digital society and government. The source language mainly expresses the important measures taken by our country in both social and government aspects to build a digital China. On the basis of understanding the content of the original text, the translator directly translates this part into “a digital society, digital government”. If the translator translates the two categories of words “步伐、水平” directly, it will affect the audience’s understanding, make the text logical and redundant, and fail to achieve the principle of expressiveness in translation principles.

#### (4) Treatment of repeated words

Example 4 [ *The Report* in 2019]

Original: 决不允许搞选择性执法、任性执法，决不允许刁难企业和群众。

Translation: There can be no tolerance for selective or arbitrary law enforcement or for making things different for businesses and people.

There are some differences between English and Chinese. Considering from three aspects: grammar, writing structure and rhetoric, Chinese uses repeated words more often than English, forming repeated structure, expressing the emphasis of mood, strengthening the strength and intensity of thoughts and feelings, expressing the sense of rhythm and rhythm of writing, and enhancing the expressive force of text content (He, 2022). In English texts, we usually avoid the use of repeated words and choose words with similar meanings and the same usage to replace them, so as to enhance the diversity of words. In Example 4, the sentence pattern of “决不允许……” is repeated, which strengthens our firm belief in enforcing the law fairly and legally, and highlights the Communist Party of China (CPC)’s purpose of serving the people and its action goal of benefiting the people.

#### 4.1.2. Syntactic Level

##### (1) Unowned sentence

Example 5 [ *The Report* in 2019]

Original: 对摘帽县和脱贫人口的扶持政策要保持一段时间，巩固脱贫成果。

Translation: Support policies that apply to counties and populations that have recently been lifted out of poverty will be maintained for a period to consolidation progress in poverty alleviation.

The sentence without subject is the grammatical structure of modern Chinese, and it is a kind of non-subject-predicate sentence, which refers to a sentence without subject. The function of this kind of sentence is to describe the action, change, etc., rather than to describe “who” or “what” to carry out this action or change. However, a complete English sentence needs a subject and pays attention to tense and voice. A large number of official documents, such as the *Report*, use the subject-free structure, which makes the semantics concise and clear, thus enhancing the seriousness and seriousness of the whole text. When translating unowned sentences, translators usually translate the original text into passive versions. In Example 5, the translator uses “will be maintained” in the translation to change the active sentence of the original text into the passive sentence in the translation. On the basis of in-depth understanding of the word and the unique culture of China, this translation version further broke the reading barrier of the target language, conveyed the accurate meaning of the source language and spread the culture of China.

##### (2) Parallel structure

Example 6 [ *The Report* in 2021]

Original: 加快数字社会建设步伐，提高数字政府建设水平，营造良好数字生态，建设数字中国。

Translation: We will work faster to develop a digital society, digital government, and healthy digital ecosystem as we pursue the Digital China initiative.

In the Chinese context, several clauses with equal status and similar structure are mostly used to explain a certain point of view, action and meaning, and there is a parallel relationship between the clauses. In English, in order to balance the context and enhance the coherence of the article, parallel structures are also used. When translating parallel structures, translators usually follow the grammatical structure in the original text to achieve the ecological balance between Chinese and English in the linguistic dimension. In Example 6, it is obvious that “加快数字社会建设步伐，提高数字政府建设水平，营造良好数字生态” uses a parallel structure to introduce the measures taken by China to build a digital China, in which “加快，提高，营造” belong to three verbs of the same meaning group. Therefore, the translator translates the three verbs in the original sentence into “work faster to develop”, translates the key noun structure followed by the verb into a noun phrase in the form of “digital society, digital government, and healthy digital ecosystem”, and combines them with the previous verbs to form a verb-object structure with the same structure and related meanings, thus realizing a parallel structural sentence in the English context.

## 4.2. Cultural Dimension

The adaptive selection and transformation of cultural dimension means that the translator should focus on the transmission and interpretation of the inherent meaning and meaning of bilingual culture in the process of translation, so as to achieve the purpose of cultural communication between bilinguals. A large number of words with China characteristics have appeared in the *Report* over the years. They are not only rich in Chinese traditional culture, but also contain the core thinking of the collective leadership of the CPC Central Committee in governing the country. According to Wang (2020), Chinese characteristic words are divided into five categories: proper nouns, allusions, abbreviations, idioms and figurative words, and the corresponding translation strategies are analyzed respectively. Based on this view, this paper mainly discusses the adaptive selection and transformation of English versions in the cultural dimension from the perspectives of proper nouns, allusions, abbreviations and idioms.

### 4.2.1. Proper nouns

**Table 1.** Some Proper Nouns in the Report and Their Translation

proper noun	English translation
一带一路	The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)
精准扶贫	Precision poverty alleviation
供给侧结构性改革	Supply-side structural reform
乡村振兴战略	Rural revitalization strategy
京津冀协同发展	The coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region
粤港澳大湾区	Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area
革命老区	Old revolutionary base areas
全面从严治党	Full and strict discipline over the Party

Proper nouns refer to a kind of nouns, indicating specific and unique people, things, places, institutions, policies, systems, etc. In the *Report* from 2019 to 2023, there are many proper nouns with China characteristics. They are an important way for foreign audiences to understand the basic situation of China. When translating such words, translators will combine the objective reality and cultural connotation of China, and mostly adopt literal translation. (Table 1). For example, “带”is

literally translated as “Belt” and “路” is literally translated as “Road”, so “一带一路” is literally translated as “The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)”.

#### 4.2.2. Allusions

Example 7 [The *Report* in 2021]

Original: 思危方能居安

Translation: Only alertness to danger will ensure safety.

Allusions refer to words with origins, such as ancient poems and songs, historical stories and so on. Such words and expressions have a strong color of China culture and a historical flavor of a specific period. Due to the cultural differences between China and foreign countries, they often confuse foreign readers when they appear in the text. In Example 7, “思危方能居安” is the application of Premier Li Keqiang’s “居安思危，思则有备，有备无患”， which means to exhort and encourage the whole party and people of all nationalities to guard against arrogance and rashness, cultivate crisis awareness and strive for greater achievements and victories in the face of existing achievements. This application gives the ancient prose a new era significance, enhances the cultural color of the prose, and shows the charm of China’s characteristic culture. In order to better realize the transformation of bilingual cultural dimension, the translator adopts literal translation in translating this text, which directly explains the central connotation of the original text, conveys the speaker’s inner thoughts and avoids cultural barriers.

#### 4.2.3. Abbreviations

Example 8 [The *Report* in 2021]

Original: 拓展产学研用融合通道。

Translation: We will expand the channels that bringing together enterprises, universities, research institutions and end-users.

For the convenience of saying, we will regularly abbreviate or omit some words, and some abbreviated forms form a compact structure. However, due to the differences between Chinese and foreign cultures and terms, foreign readers cannot understand the internal meanings of these words efficiently and accurately. Therefore, when translating words with this feature, translators often adopt translation strategies of addition and annotation. In Example 8, the acronym “产学研用” is used in the original text, which shows the integrated development path built by China to realize the industrialization of scientific and technological innovation achievements and promote key scientific and technological research. In the translated text, the translator translated the word “产学研用” into “enterprises, universities, research institutions and end-users”, and further explained its connotation to help foreign readers remember and spread the text content widely.

#### 4.2.4. Idioms

Example 9 [The *Report* in 2020]

Original: 中华儿女风雨同舟、守望相助，筑起了抗击疫情的巍峨长城。

Translation: Through all these efforts, we, all the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation, have stood together in the most trying of times and build a Great Wall of solidarity against the epidemic.

Idioms refer to four-character phrases that have been used in Chinese vocabulary for a long time. They generally come from China’s classics, historical allusions or myths and legends, and are important expressions of China’s traditional culture in the language (Wang, 2020). In the example, “风雨同舟” refers to experiencing difficulties together; “守望相助” means to help each other, take care of each other and advance and retreat together. The translator digs into the intrinsic meaning of idioms and translates it into “have stood together in the most trying of times”, which makes the connotation of idioms more understandable, and also shows the firm belief and unyielding spirit of

Chinese sons and daughters in fighting the epidemic together, and shows the indomitable national spirit of the Chinese nation to foreign audiences.

### 4.3. Communicative Dimension

Communicative dimension refers to the translator’s in-depth analysis of the language itself and cultural characteristics of the source language in the process of translation, reasonable inference of the communicative intention that the source language wants to convey, and reasonable translation of the source language in combination with the principles of the use of the target language, so as to achieve the ecological balance of bilingualism in the communication dimension and achieve the goal of barrier-free communication between bilinguals. In the *Report* from 2019 to 2023, the structure of “number + acronym” reflects the balance of the communicative dimension of eco-translatology, and related structures have appeared frequently many times. (Table 2)

**Table 2.** Translation of Some Numbers +Abbreviations in the Report

Numbers + abbreviations	English translation	Frequency
四个意识	maintain political integrity, think in big-picture terms, follow the leadership core, and keep in alignment with the central Party leadership.	5
四个自信	our confidence in the path, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics	5
两个维护	uphold General Secretary Xi Jinping’s core position on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole, and resolutely uphold the Party Central Committee’s authority and its centralized, unified leadership.	5
双创	innovation and business startups	6
四风	for formalities’ sake, bureaucratism, hedonism, and extravagance.	7
六稳	The six fronts refer to employment, the financial sector, foreign trade, foreign investment, domestic investment, and expectations.	9
六保	The six areas refer to job security, basic living needs, operations of market entities, food and energy security, stable industrial and supply chains, and the normal functioning of primary-level governments.	9

## 5. Conclusion

Different from other translated texts, the translation of political documents has special attributes such as politics, timeliness and seriousness, and is closely related to China’s publicity work. From the perspective of Eco-translatology, this paper analyzes and discusses the English versions of the *Report* from 2019 to 2023 from the perspective of language, culture and communication. It is found that political documents make good use of cultural words with Chinese characteristics, such as four-character words, abbreviations, allusions, etc., and often combine sentence. Therefore, translators should first enhance their own cultural and political literacy, give full play to their subjective initiative, reduce the obstacles of readers’ reading and understanding, and realize the purpose of publicizing political documents. Secondly, translators should master cultural differences between China and foreign countries and translation skills such as free translation, provincial translation, combined translation and annotation, so as to be disseminators of China culture and promote cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries. Finally, the translator should polish and improve the translation for many times to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the translation and realize the ecological balance between the source language and the target language in the linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions. I hope this paper can help the application and research of eco-translatology, promote the development of political literature translation in the future, and make a modest contribution to China’s foreign exchange.

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