

# The Exploration of Translating Terms with Chinese Characteristics — A Case Study of Report on the Work of the Government 2020

Jing Cui

Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur 50603, Malaysia.

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**Abstract:** China's annual government work report (GWR) contains terms with Chinese characteristics (TCC), reflecting unique policy frameworks. Translating these terms into English poses significant challenges due to cultural disparities between China and the West. This paper examines the English translation methods used for such terms, using the 2020 GWR as a case study, aiming to provide valuable insights for future translation practices.

**Keywords:** Terms with Chinese Characteristics; Government Work Report; Translation Methods

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## 1. Introduction

The government work report (GWR) is an annual document encompassing the work plans, goals, and future projections of China's government. It serves as a crucial document for promoting understanding of China's national conditions worldwide. Additionally, the report contains numerous terms with Chinese characteristics (TCC), representing the country's unique policy frameworks and drawing attention globally. Therefore, translating these terms becomes essential for effectively narrating "China's story".

This paper conducts a case study using the 2020 GWR and its English translation to explore translation methods for TCC. It offers examples to illustrate the importance of employing appropriate translation strategies in specific contexts. By delving into these translation methods, this study aims to provide valuable insights and serve as a reference for future translation endeavors.

## 2. The Definition of Terms with Chinese characteristics

The TCC are ideological and cultural products stemming from the modern development of China and the cultural exchanges between China and the West during modern times. They have gradually evolved through the sinicization of Marxism and have continued to evolve alongside the development of Chinese society.<sup>[1]</sup> As the name suggests, these terms originate in China and are influenced by the nation's unique customs, culture, politics, social environment, and other factors. In general, these terms are intertwined with three key aspects: culture, politics, and the contemporary era.<sup>[2]</sup>

## 3. A Brief Introduction of Government Work Report of 2020

The GWR summarizes the government's previous year's work and outlines the plans for the current year's initiatives and internal governance.<sup>[3]</sup> The 2020 GWR addresses the unique context of the ongoing pandemic and emphasizes the importance of minimizing losses while achieving development goals. It highlights the government's key focus areas for the year, particularly in epidemic prevention and control.

## 4. Theoretical Supports

The Skopos Theory, proposed by Hans Vermeer, is a core translation theory in German functionalism, based on the idea that "translation is a form of human behavior" and "every behavior has a purpose". It emphasizes that the translation method is influenced by the intended purpose of the target text, guided by the principles of purpose, fidelity, and coherence. The English translation of government reports aims to communicate China's distinctive culture, society, and politics globally. Fidelity demands strict loyalty to

the translation, given the reports' significance in representing China's achievements and image. Coherence ensures concise and clear content that aligns with public thinking for reader acceptance.

On the other hand, Functional Equivalence Theory, proposed by Nida, focuses on achieving functional equivalence between two languages rather than rigid word-to-word correspondence. It emphasizes the function of the source text in the source culture and the function of the target text in the target culture, with priority given to preserving the intended meaning when conflicts arise.

## 5. Methods Applied in the Translating Government Work Report of 2020

After conducting a thorough analysis of the translation of specific TCC in the 2020 GWR, the author identified several primary translation methods that were predominantly employed, as follows:

### 5.1 Amplification

Amplification in translation involves adding necessary words, phrases, or sentences to ensure the target text's completeness and alignment with the audience's thinking and cultural background.<sup>[8]</sup>

Example 1:

(1) ST: 支持电商、快递进农村, 拓展农村消费。

TT: We will support the roll-out of e-commerce and express delivery services in rural areas to expand rural consumption.

(2) ST: 去年以来经济社会发展和今年疫情防控取得的成绩, 是以习近平同志为核心的党中央坚强领导的结果。

TT: We owe what we have achieved in economic and social development since last year and in covid-19 control this year to the strong leadership of the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core.

In the two examples above, the Chinese original sentences lack a subject. To achieve sentence completeness in English and align with its characteristics, the personal pronoun "we" can be added as the subject, identifying the Chinese Government.

Example 2:

(1) ST: 但, 生命至上。

TT: However, life is invaluable.

(2) ST: 过去一年, 很不容易, 很不平凡。

TT: Last year was a difficult and unusual period.

In the example above, the original text lacks predicates. In the translation, it is necessary to add the implied predicates completely to conform to the English expression conventions.

Example 3:

(1) ST: 三大攻坚战

TT: the three critical battles against potential risk, poverty, and pollution

(2) ST: 深化放管服改革

TT: We will press ahead with reforms to streamline administration and delegate power, improve regulation, and upgrade service.

In the context of GWR, it is common to encounter specialized and concise terms. When translating such terms, employing an approach that includes adding translation becomes of paramount importance to precisely elucidate their specific meanings, thereby ensuring the comprehensive comprehension of these terms by foreign readers.

### 5.2 Omission

Omission, in adherence to the coherence principle of Skopos theory, excludes words incongruent with the target language's thinking logic and expression norms, preventing verbosity in translation.

Example 4:

ST: 严禁新建楼堂馆所, 严禁铺张浪费。

TT: Construction of new government buildings and wasteful and excessive spending will be strictly prohibited.

In the example provided, the word "严禁" appears twice. In Chinese, this expression emphasizes the tone, but in English, achieving conciseness and fluency is possible by using "strictly prohibited" only once.

Example 5:

ST: 严惩非法捕杀和交易野生动物的行为。

TT: Illegal hunting and trading of wild animals will be severely punished.

In the example above, the word “行为” is a category word commonly used in Chinese. However, in the translation, it can be omitted to avoid making the sentence cumbersome.

### 5.3 Combination and Division

Combination is a translation method well-suited for Chinese-English translation. It involves translating two or more short Chinese sentences into a single English sentence or a compound sentence.

Example 6:

(1) ST: 不误农时抓春耕。不懈推进脱贫攻坚。

TT: We kept up with the spring farming schedule, and continued the critical battle against poverty.

(2) ST: 加强国家安全能力建设。依法打击各类犯罪，建设更高水平的平安中国。

TT: We will strength national security capacity building, punish crimes in accordance with law, and more effectively carry out the Peaceful China initiative.

Chinese and English exhibit significant differences in language structure. English often uses connectives, creating strong logical relationships between sentences. Conversely, Chinese relies on short sentences with few connectives. To accommodate English readers' habits, translators can use the combination method when translating from Chinese to English;

Division is a method used in English translation to break down the original sentence into two or more sentences. This means translating a word, phrase, or clause from the original text into a clause or sometimes even an independent sentence.

Example 7:

ST: 今年财政赤字率拟按 3.6%以上安排，财政赤字规模比去年增加 1 万亿元，同时发行 1 万亿抗疫特别国债。

TT: The deficit-to-GDP ratio this year is projected at more than 3.6 percent, with a deficit increase of one trillion yuan over last year. On top of this, one trillion yuan of government bonds for COVID-19 control will also be issued.

Splitting a sentence at may harm the style or intended meaning of the original text. However, it is not always unacceptable. Occasionally, to convey the original meaning faithfully and smoothly, splitting a sentence can enhance the fluidity of the translation.

### 5.4 Other Translation methods

In addition to the mentioned translation methods, conversion, inversion, negation, and voice changes are also utilized in translating the 2020 GWR.

Firstly, due to the lack of corresponding language between English and Chinese, direct translation may not be appropriate. Therefore, when using the conversion translation method, translators should pay attention to the context and the overall meaning to ensure the accuracy and fluency of the translation.

Example 8:

ST: 坚持政治建军、改革强军、依法治军。

TT: We will continue to enhance the political loyalty of the armed forces, strengthen them through reform and run the military in accordance with law.

This sentence uses conversion to transform the noun in the original text into a phrasal verb during translation;

Secondly, due to the word order difference between Chinese and English, translators must adjust the word order and local structure in translation based on the purpose and customary usage. However, the translated sentence should not deviate from the original sentence's main focus.

Example 9:

ST: 中国特色大国外交成果丰硕。

TT: We achieved fruitful outcomes in pursuing China's major country diplomacy.

Chinese tends to place emphasis at the end of a sentence, whereas English often emphasizes the beginning. Therefore, adjustments to the sentence structure are necessary during translation;

Thirdly, negation as a translation method involves changing affirmative or negative expressions in the original text to their opposite form in the translation. This adjustment aligns with language habits and better conveys the original text's meaning.

Example 10:

ST: 政府工作存在不足。

TT: There is still room for improvement in the work of government.

Using the negation translation method, “不足” in the source text is rendered as “room for improvement” in the target text, providing a more accurate representation of the original meaning;

Finally, Chinese uses active voice, while English often prefers passive voice. Translators should adjust the voice to suit foreign readers' preferences.

Example 11:

ST: 强化保险保障功能。

TT: The role of insurance in protecting against risks will be strengthened.

Translating the text from active to passive voice better suits the reading habits of English readers.

## 6. Conclusion

Terminologies with distinct Chinese characteristics represent China's culture and people's accomplishments. Translating them into English is vital for promoting Chinese culture globally and enhancing international communication. This study explores the translation of TCC in GWR, using Skopos Theory and Functional Equivalence Theory perspectives. Various methods, like amplification, omission, combination, and division, have proven beneficial in the translation process. However, translators must carefully select appropriate methods based on specific contexts. Further research is required to continually enhance the translation quality of TCC.

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About the author: Jing Cui, Date of Birth: January 10, 1999, Gender: Female, Han, Hebei Province, Master, English Language Studies, Affiliation: Universiti Malaya.