

# Translation Strategies for Public Documents from the Perspective of Eco-Translatology: a Case Study of the 2023 Government Work Report in English

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**Abstract:** Eco-Translatology provides a new perspective for translation through the combination of translatology and ecology. This article takes the 2023 Government Work Report as an example to explore how translators, guided by this theory, can coordinate linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions in the process of selective adaptation and adaptive selection to translate public documents.

**Keywords:** The Government Work Report; Eco-Translatology; Selective Adaptation; Adaptive Selection

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## 1. Introduction

As an official public document, the government work report is an important medium for the dissemination of China's values and ideas as well as its future development direction. In the translation process of the report, requirements such as maintaining the objectivity of the text, localizing expression, coordinating and sharing cultural backgrounds, and preserving the original characteristics as much as possible highly fit with the core of "Eco-Translatology" proposed by Professor Hu Gengshen at Tsinghua University. This paper plans to conduct an analysis and comparative study on the translation of government work reports in 2023 from the perspective of Eco-Translatology, summarizing translation strategies that are conducive to the translation of official texts.

## 2. The guiding significance of Eco-Translatology on the translation of the Government Work Reports

Eco-Translatology is a translation theory proposed by Hu Gengshen, a professor at Tsinghua University, and its sustainability and practicality has been proved by many domestic scholars. The theory regards the original text, the translated text, certain readers, and the translators, even the publishing house as a whole translation system. The translator constantly carries out selective adaptation and adaptive selection, by using all kinds of translation strategies and techniques (literal translation, paraphrasing, naturalization, alienation and so on) and focusing on the linguistic dimension (using accurate vocabulary and sentence structure), cultural dimension (retaining the characteristics of the original expression and to achieve interoperability and mutual understanding) and the communicative dimension (conveying the underlying meaning or certain persuasion with purposes) in the translation process. The "conversion in three dimensions" is an important translation method in Eco-Translatology (Hu, 2011)<sup>[3]</sup>. Therefore, translation under the guidance of the Eco-Translatology will enable the translator to accurately, completely and comprehensively grasp the content and central idea of the source language text to convey it to the target readers in a more appropriate expression.

In order to strengthen the tone and highlight the emphasis, a large number of words with Chinese characteristics, such as four-word phrases, as well as proverbial proverbs are widely used in the Government Work Report, which are inevitably deviated when exporting cultural values.

Compared with the traditional translation theory, Eco-Translatology especially emphasizes the holism of translation and is based on the dynamic environment of translation activities, which is mixed with the considerations of life (author, translator, reader, etc.), ecology (balance in translation activities) and survival (spread and acceptance of translated texts), and in the meantime, it is mixed with the characteristics of "the golden means". Therefore, the translation becomes faithful to the original text in terms of overall dynamics. Also, the theory of Eco-Translatology holds that it is not a certain translation strategy that plays a decisive role in the translation process, but "the cumulative result of the translator's multi-dimensional adaptation to the translation ecosystem and adaptive choices" (Hu, 2004)<sup>[2]</sup>.

Therefore, under the guidance of the Eco-Translatology, the translation of the Government Work Report can ensure that it can effec-

tively convey the original meaning, which is of stronger practical value and more in line with the requirements for political external publicity.

### **3. Analysis of English translation strategy of the 2023 Government Work Report based on Eco-Translatology**

Under the influence of “Adaptation and Selection” in Darwin’s theory of biological evolution, Professor Hu Gengshen put forward the “Translation Adaptation and Selection Theory” in 2004. It stresses the role of translators in translation activities, and the translator-centred view of translation is the core idea and important content of the theory of translation adaptation and selection (Hu, 2004)<sup>[2]</sup>. This theory is also one of the core concepts of Eco-Translatology.

### **4. Selective adaptation of two dimensions**

According to the theory of Eco-Translatology and its “Translation Adaptation Selection Theory”, before translating, the translator first needs to identify the differences between the source language and the target language and at the same time, needs to take into account other factors besides the language itself, such as history, economy, culture, ideology and so on. Therefore, translators need to adapt to the two languages and also let the two languages adapt to each other naturally before choosing translation methods and techniques. And this step includes both linguistic and non-linguistic adaptation and selection.

#### *4.0.1 Linguistic adaptation and selection*

There is a great difference between the word formation patterns of Chinese and English. There are quite a lot of four-character words in the Government’s work report, which are well-structured, rich in meaning, making the expression of the sentence condensed and rich in deep meaning.

Example 1. “We deepened reform and opening up across the board in an effort to create a new pattern of development.”

Since Chinese is an ideographic language, the translator needs to adapt to the grammatical structure of English and add the missing subject and other parts to form a complete sentence in order to translate the real meaning clearly in the target language.

#### *4.0.2 Non-linguistic adaptation and selection*

As Hu Gengshen said, “The subject here is broadly defined, i.e., all the living beings involved in translation activities, including the author of the original text, translators, readers, translation initiators, sponsors, publishers, marketers, editors, and so on, i.e., the ‘translation community’. The external environment may include the natural economic environment, linguistic and cultural environment, socio-political environment and so on related to the translation environment. The translation ecological environment is interwoven by various elements and is the sum of various natural and humanistic factors for the occurrence, existence and development of translation activities.” (Hu, 2003)<sup>[1]</sup>. Due to the dynamic nature of both the subject and external environment of the translation ecosystem, translators need to adapt dynamically while considering various parts of the ecosystem, in order to present real-time and even time resistant translation.

Example 2. “an open world economy”

As a result of China’s deepening openness to the world economy, the expression changed from “export-oriented economy” to “global-market-oriented economy” and “global economy” to the current expression. Taking into account the context of the passage in which the term is used and the evolution of the expression, the translator chose a more modern version to adapt to the economic, social and popular changes.

### **5. Adaptive selection of three dimensions**

Selective adaptation is more detailed, mainly focusing on the practical level of translation, such as the selection of specific translation methods and techniques. The process mainly focuses on the three levels of linguistic, communication and culture, contributing to the realization of the harmony of the whole translation ecology.

#### *5.0.3 Linguistic dimension*

The conversion of translation between source language and target language inevitably requires translation methods such as direct translation, transliteration and paraphrasing to ensure the adaption in individual writing habits.

Example 3. “...to strengthen themselves through reform, scientific and technological advances.”

Chinese expressions have more repetitive structures compared to English(Lian, 2010)<sup>[6]</sup>. Repetitive structures form parallel sentences in Chinese, creating a stronger momentum, but if the translator directly translates them, they will be very cumbersome in the eyes of the target language readers. Therefore, the translator adopts the combination to “strengthen themselves through...advances”, which is simple and concise and fits with the concise and succinct character of the government work report.

Example 4. “The Party successfully convened its 20th National Congress, during which it drew up an inspiring blueprint for building China into a modern socialist country in all respects.”

In this translation, the subject of the original text is “the 20th Party Congress” can not make the action of “depicting”, so there are two ways of adaptive selection: firstly, making the subject passive dynamic treatment, change to “The blueprint was drawn in the Congress...”. This kind of expression adapts to the English expression habit and maintains the style of the source language as much as possible; Secondly, adopting the anthropomorphism technique, using more vivid and lively language to translate without changing the sentence structure of the source and target languages as shown above. It retains the overall structural framework of the original language, adds a different atmosphere to the translation, and facilitates the understanding of the target readers at the same time, thus realizing the optimal adaptive transformation.

Example 5. “Over the past five years, tax cuts and fee reductions respectively totaled 5.4 trillion yuan and 2.8 trillion yuan. This policy not only helped enterprises overcome difficulties and stay afloat, but also nurtured business growth and cultivated sources of tax revenue. ”

In order to maintain semantic equivalence, the translated text of “cultivated sources of tax revenue...” presents the flexible expression in the source language with the most direct and essential connotation in front of the target readers, which is not only close to the original text, but also suitable for external dissemination.

These typical translations of the 2023 Government Work Report are faithful to the original ideas while adapting to the language, thinking and cultural habits of foreign readers, and achieve a balance between the ecology of the source language and that of the translated language.

Example 6. “Confronted with new downward pressure on the economy, we acted decisively and made timely adjustments. We made use of the policy tools kept in reserve over recent years, front-loaded the implementation of adopted policies, and remained firm in advancing supply-side structural reform. We unveiled and implemented a full range of policies and follow-up measures to stabilize the economy.”

The lack of a subject in the sentence structure of the original sentence is a common phenomenon in Chinese expressions. According to the context and the understanding of the main idea, the absence of the subject does not affect the understanding of Chinese readers. In the first step of the translation process, the translator divided the original paragraph into three independent and complete English sentences. After adding the subject “we”, the paragraph is first summarized by the sentence “We acted decisively and made timely adjustments”, and then the measures mentioned in the source language are put into separate sentences, preserving the subject-verb structure of the original text. Finally, the sentence “We unveiled and implemented a full range of policies and follow-up measures to stabilize the economy.” works as the conclusion of the whole paragraph. This approach achieves a balance between the ecology of the source language and the ecology of the translated language, and achieves ecological equivalence at the level of the “linguistic dimension”.

#### *5.0.4 Cultural dimension*

There are big differences between Chinese and English culture, which are mainly reflected in the way of thinking, values and ideology. The translation of the Government Work Report needs to face readers with different cultural backgrounds, and its translation, as a role of bridge, should also refer to the political environment, cultural connotations of the appropriate conversion, taking into account the accuracy and acceptance of the target readers and, at the same time, avoiding misinterpretation as well as transmitting the cultural information contained in political terms to target readers.

Example 7. “Some local governments have used one-size-fits-all approaches or taken excessive measures when implementing policies.”

“One-size-fits-all approaches” is a phrase from the first chapter of Liu Xinwu’s *The Bell and Drum Tower*, which was originally intended to be a metaphor for the generalization, uniformity and absolutization of people, i.e., the mechanical singularity (in terms of concepts or ways of doing things) and the inability to do specific analysis of specific problems. In the 2023 government work report, it indicates inflex-

ible policies. The translator adopts the method of direct translation, which not only realizes the reasonable and accurate communication of the original text, but also avoids the ambiguity caused by cultural barriers, and realizes the conversion of the source language and the target language in the cultural dimension.

Example 8. “With these efforts, we have fully secured the food supply of more than 1.4 billion people.”

The translator directly discarded the rhetorical device of reference and chose to directly translate the word as “food supply”, breaking the cultural gap between Chinese and English, and changing the sentence style, which not only takes into account the expression of the target language readers’ habits, but also ensures the output of the original language and culture.

#### 5.0.5 Communicative dimension

Translation is a communicative act between different cultures through language. With the help of “the adaptive selection of communicative intent conversion in the translation process, the pursuit is that the communicative ecology of the original text and the translated text can be optimally maintained and preserved” (Hu, 2013: 238)<sup>[4]</sup>. “The Eco-Translatology focuses on grasping textual information in a macro and dynamic way, adopting an adaptive selection of conversion strategies, focusing on whether the communicative intent in the original text is reflected in the translated language system, and in particular, focusing on the equivalence of the translation of certain political terms with the political meaning of the original text, in order to achieve the purpose of interpretation, publicity and effective communication” (Lan, 2018: 53)<sup>[5]</sup>. Chinese political discourse system is nurtured in the profound traditional culture and rooted in the practice of socialist construction with Chinese characteristics. Therefore, adopting the strategy of “turning Chinese characteristics into world expression”, translating contemporary Chinese political concepts in a language that meets international norms, presenting the world with a real, three-dimensional and comprehensive China are kernels of the Eco-Translatology.

Example 9. “Staying true to the idea that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets...”

The Government Work Report uses the rhetorical technique of metaphor, comparing “green water and green mountains” to “gold and silver mountains” to convey China’s concept of environmental protection. The translation uses the technique of metaphor, retaining the syntax of the original sentence but erasing the metaphorical and referential significance of “gold and silver mountains” and directly translating it into “intangible wealth”, which accurately conveys the original meaning and China’s environmental protection philosophy.

## 6. Conclusion

Due to the simplicity and conciseness of the government work report, literal translation is commonly used for the 2023 government work report. In addition, the treatment of long sentences also involves splitting and merging, literal translation and omission. In the process of the embodiment of these translation methods, the difference of translation under the guidance of Eco-Translatology theory lies in “selection and adaptation”, which means translators select expressions and techniques for target language readers’ better understanding.

In conclusion, translating public documents like government work reports requires translators to fully consider the linguistic and cultural context of the original text and choose appropriate translation methods to handle related concepts and terms in order to adapt to the ever-changing ecological environment for translation.

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