

# Study on Adaptive Selection in the English Translation of The Governance of China from the Perspective of Eco-Translatology

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## ABSTRACT

As a newly-emerging ecological paradigm in the research of translation studies, Eco-Translatology is a knowledge system created in China, featuring rich content, organized structure and unique characteristics. From the perspective of Eco-Translatology, the translator should take the translation ecologies of the target language into consideration, make selections and adaptations to the original text, and adopt multi-dimensional transformation strategies, among which the transformation of linguistics, culture and communication are of great importance. This thesis takes the Governance of China IV (hereinafter referred to as the Governance) as the object of study, and tries to analyze the English version of the Governance by exploring the “three-dimensional transformation” from the perspective of “selective adaptation and adaptive selection” of Eco-Translatology.

## KEYWORDS

Eco-Translatology; Selective adaptation and adaptive selection; Three-dimensional transformation; The Governance of China IV.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, China’s comprehensive national strength has risen notably, enabling it to stand out prominently on the global stage and offering opportunities for equal development to countries worldwide. Amid its interactions with the international community, an increasing number of people have expressed a desire to understand and learn from China. Concurrently, China has intensified its international publicity efforts, thereby providing a broader platform for the world to gain insights into the country. In this context, many books about Chinese are translated into different languages for overseas readers, one of which is a famous book about Chinese politics named the Governance of China IV written by the president of China.

The Governance is based upon the theoretical framework of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. This volume collects 109 important works of Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, including speeches, talks, addresses, instructions, and congratulatory letters spanning from February 3, 2020 to May 10, 2022, supplemented by 45 relevant photographs, and is systematically organized into 21 thematic sections. There are 10 core parts in the book, namely Overall CPC Leadership, the People First, Confront Challenges Head-on, New Development Stage, Philosophy and Dynamic, Whole-Process People’s Democracy, Socialist Rule of Law, Advanced Socialist Culture, Development and Security, Party Self-Reform for Social Transformation and a Global Community of Shared future. By 2026, the Governance has been translated into 42 different languages and published in more than 180 countries and regions, making

it one of the world's most widely translated, geographically covered, and influential works by a state leader.

From the perspective of Eco-Translatology, the author has conducted a detailed study of the book, trying to compare Chinese text and English translation and analyze the target language by adopting the strategy of three-dimensional transformation.

## **2. THEORETICAL BASIS OF ECO-TRANSLATOLOGY**

As a theoretical system of translation studies originated in China, Eco-Translatology was first introduced by Hu Gengshen in 2001. In 2013, Hu published his book *Eco-translatology construction & interpretation*, signaling that the theory had entered a mature stage. Eco-Translatology tries to interpret and examine translation from eco-holism, rather than from the perspectives of linguistics, literature, culturology, communication, Skopos, feminism, ideology and so on [1]. Different from the traditional translation studies of language-centered and culture-centered paradigm, Eco-translatology takes ecological holism as its core and is based on Darwin's theory of evolution and systematic theory, regarding translation as a dynamic ecological system.

Eco-Translatology is a subject of interdisciplinary study, and the thought is rooted in "the survival of the fittest" of Darwin's Evolution. The Theory of Adaptation and Selection in Translation draws on the evolutionary principle of Darwin's 'natural selection', explains and demonstrates the translation process from the perspective of adaptation and selection, advocates the application of natural science theoretical concepts to translation studies, and this is actually unconsciously influenced and inspired by the complex relational thinking, linking natural science research with humanities and social science research[2]. The logic of the adaptation and selection is the theoretical cornerstone of the Eco-Translatology. During translation, the translator is actually working in the process of "ecological transplantation" from the source language to the target language by resorting to adaptive selection and selective adaptation in a certain translation ecology and the quality of the translation depends on the adaptation of the target language's translation ecology, which is rather similar to the "the survival of the fittest" of Darwin's Evolution. Eco-Translatology can be understood as an ecological approach to translation studies, or translation studies from an ecological perspective [3].

The wholeness and dynamics of the translational eco-environment constitute one of the core theoretical presuppositions of Eco-Translatology. Eco-Translatology defines the translational eco-environment as "an interconnected, interactive and dynamically balanced organic whole composed of multiple elements such as the source language, target language, translator, reader, culture, and social context", where all elements are interdependent and mutually restrictive, jointly influencing the entire process of translation activities and the final form of the target text [4]. This viewpoint forms a theoretical echo with the textual ecological thought proposed by Peter Newmark, a British translation theorist. In *A Textbook of Translation*, Newmark argues that translation must take into account four major levels—the textual level, referential level, cohesive level, and naturalness level—and holds that "these four levels are distinct from each other yet frequently interact with and may conflict with one another, forming the most core micro-ecological system of translation activities" [5]. His emphasis on textual wholeness and the correlation between various levels has laid an important theoretical foundation for the micro-ecological research of Eco-Translatology, and also verified the systematic principle of the translational eco-system that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts".

The "translator-centered" theory and the "three-dimensional transformation" theory serve as the core practical supports of the Eco-Translatology theoretical system. Different from traditional translation theories that neglect the translator's subjectivity, Eco-Translatology explicitly establishes the translator's status as a "central adapter", holding that the translator is the most dynamic core element in the translational eco-system. "In the translation process, the translator should exert a 'leading' role,

make their own judgments and choices in the process of adapting to the translational eco-environment, and the correctness or appropriateness of such choices is closely related to the translator's translation competence, translation experience, personal experience and other factors". Based on the translator's subjectivity, Hu proposed the principle of "three-dimensional transformation" in translation, namely "the adaptive selection and transformation in the linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions", advocating that "the three-dimensional transformation requires translators to conduct adaptive transformations in the linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions within the multi-level translational eco-environment, and make translation choices that are not only faithful to the original text but also take into account the acceptability of target readers" [4]. This principle provides specific methodological guidance for translators' practical activities.

In summary, Eco-Translatology takes the Theory of Adaptation and Selection in Translation as its theoretical cornerstone, the wholeness of the translational eco-environment as its presupposition, the translator's subjectivity as its core, and the three-dimensional transformation as its practical method. Integrating interdisciplinary thoughts such as evolutionism, system theory, and ecolinguistics, as well as the research achievements of scholars at home and abroad, it has constructed a complete "theory-method-practice" trinity system. As Hu stated, "The ecological paradigm we refer to is the deepening and expansion of the Eco-Translatological research paradigm from an ecological perspective. It is a meta-disciplinary and holistic research paradigm that succeeds the linguistic paradigm and the cultural paradigm: this ecological paradigm is both a conformity and a compensation, a transformation and a transcendence" [2]. This theory not only provides scientific guidance for translation practice but also promotes the indigenous innovation and international dissemination of Chinese translation theory, injecting new vitality into the development of global translation research.

### **3. THREE-DIMENSIONAL TRANSFORMATION**

The so-called three-dimensional transformation is the core methodology of Eco-Translatology and it is constructed and perfected by Professor Hu Gengshen. With "adaptation and selection" as its foundational logic, this strategy breaks free from the rigid binary oppositions between form and content, as well as between literal and free translation that have long dominated traditional translation research. By situating translation practices within a dynamically balanced translational ecosystem, it delivers a systematic, actionable methodological framework for translators engaged in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural work, and functions as the pivotal vehicle enabling Eco-Translatology to advance from theoretical conceptualization to real-world application.

The three-dimensional transformation can be divided into three aspects as linguistics, culture and communication. For the linguistic dimension, it focuses on the language form of the source text and target text. "Adaptive selection and transformation in the linguistic dimension refers to the translator's adaptive selection and transformation of linguistic forms during the translation process. Such adaptive selection and transformation in the linguistic dimension is carried out in various aspects and at multiple levels, spanning the full linguistic hierarchy including lexis, syntax, discourse, style, and rhetoric" [4]. Compared with traditional translation, the selection and adaptation in linguistic dimension attaches more importance to the dynamic selection of ecological adaptation rather than static equivalence, which means the translator needs to fully understand the linguistic ecology of the target text such as its language form, word choice, register and etc. A typical example would be the translation of Chinese poem. In order to convey the poetic features, the translator should adapt the form, rhythm, rhyme and other stylistic elements instead of resorting to literal translation that erases the original style and structure. With regards to the cultural dimension, the application of it is the selection and adaptation of the cultural sign such as culture-loaded words, culture-specific images, value concepts and folk customs and traditions. Frequently where there is cultural focus, there is a translation problem due to the cultural 'gap' or 'distance' between the source and target languages. ... the translator of a cultural word, which is always less context-bound than ordinary language, has to

bear in mind both the motivation and the cultural specialist (in relation to the text's topic) and linguistic level of the readership [5]. Language is the carrier of culture, and the culture-bound words are the reflection of the lifestyle and cultural ecology of a certain community. As for communicative dimension, the aim the it is the realization of communicative intent and the fulfillment of communicative functions in translation. The core of the adaptive selection and transformation in the communicative dimension lies in dynamically adjusting translation strategies in accordance with the core functions and communicative purposes of the text, so as to ensure that the target text fulfills the corresponding communicative functions in the target language context. When it comes to public signs and warning signs, the priority of communicative dimension transformation is to adapt to the general expression norms of the target language to ensure the realization of their warning and guiding functions. Other types text like diplomatic discourse and international material should also be translated in a precise and effective way to make sure the communicative effect can be achieved.

## **4. CASE STUDY**

From the perspective of Eco-Translatology, the principle of “selective adaptation” and “adaptive selection” should be followed. The translator should take all the ecology of the source text and target text in terms of linguistics, culture and communication. In this part, the thesis will give a detailed analysis of the three-dimensional transformation applied in the English version of the Governance of China IV.

### **4.1. Adaptive selection and transformation in the linguistic dimension**

Due to the striking differences between Chinese and Western modes of thinking, as well as the fact that Chinese and English belong to distinct language families, the adaptive selection and transformation in the linguistic dimension is conducted in various aspects and at different levels, covering the entire linguistic hierarchy including vocabulary, syntax, discourse, style, rhetoric and other linguistic levels. The following are instances of adaptive selection and transformation in the linguistic dimension.

Example 1:

Source text:

全党同志都要明大德、守公德、严私德，清清白白做人，干干净净做事[7]。

Target text:

All party members must have political integrity, observe the code of conduct in public office, and apply high moral standards in their private lives. They should be clean and honest in office and in private lives.

Chinese tends to emphasize syntactic structure and frequently employs parallelism to express intense emotions. Meanwhile, such parallel structures are euphonious and rhythmically powerful. Particularly in this sentence, where the importance of public morality and private morality is highlighted, the use of parallelism carries strong rhetorical impact and a sense of justice, enabling readers to perceive an inherent uprightness and moral integrity.

Example 2:

Source text:

中央政治局的同志要找准坐标、选准方位、瞄准靶心，善于从政治上观察和处理问题，使讲政治的要求从外部要求转化为内在主动[7]。

Target text:

We members of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee must be adept at observing and dealing with problems from a political perspective, in the same way as we do in shooting—knowing the range, aligning the sights, and aiming at the bullseye—to make political awareness an inner part of our thinking rather than requirement imposed from the outside.

In the source text, “找准坐标、选准方位、瞄准靶心” are typical Chinese expressions with metaphor and parallelism. Rather than resorting to mechanical and stilted literal translation, the translator first clearly describes the relationship of the metaphor via the phrase “in the same way as we do in shooting”. In addition, with three consistent verb-object construction, the sentence reproduces a similar rhythm by using shooting actions to take a political stand. Through adaptive selection, the target text not only faithfully retains the parallelism and metaphorical rhetorical features of the source text, but also effectively avoids the semantic vagueness in the target language context that would be caused by mechanical literal translation of the source text’s metaphor.

Example 3:

Source text:

任何形式的霸权、霸道、霸凌的行径，都是根本行不通的[7]。

Target text:

No blackmailing, blockading or applying maximum pressure on others will never work.

In the source text, rhetorical structure of “霸权、霸道、霸凌” are similar to the alliteration in English. With the same sound pronounced in the first word, the sentence gives a powerful manifestation of China’s critical attitudes towards different forms of hegemonism in the world. The translator didn’t translate it into hegemony, domineering and bullying which are literal translation of the words while using paratactic gerund structure “blackmailing, blockading or applying maximum pressure”, accurately corresponds to the connotation of the meaning in Chinese. It reproduces the same parallelism and rhymes of Chinese, and also it agrees with the expressions of English political essay, which is a typical transformation in linguistics.

#### **4.2.Adaptive selection and transformation in the cultural dimension**

The adaptive selection and transformation in the cultural dimension is critical in conveying the cultural connotation of the source text. As Peter Newmark stated in his book, “your ultimate consideration should be recognition of the cultural achievements referred to in the SL text, and respect for all foreign countries and their cultures” [5]. The transmission of cross-cultural connotation should be focused when there is a specific culture-loaded expression. The translator should bridge the cultural gap between the east and west through adaptive strategies such as supplement of cultural default and avoidance of cultural misunderstanding, so as to make sure that the connotation of the source text can be transmitted precisely in the target text ecology.

Example 4:

Source text:

经此一战，中国人民彻底扫除了近代以来任人宰割、仰人鼻息的百年屈辱，彻底扔掉了“东亚病夫”的帽子，中国人民真正扬眉吐气了[7]。

Target text:

Through this war, we the Chinese people ended our century-long history of humiliation following the Opium War of 1840. We would no longer allow ourselves to be trampled on or dependent upon others. We bid farewell to the image of “the sick man of East Asia”. We did ourselves proud and felt truly heartened.

The core of adaptive selection in the translation is to convey the meaning of Chinese historic culture-loaded words, enabling international readers fully understand the historical connotation and national sentiments of China, thereby avoiding the misunderstandings caused by culture default.

From the perspective of a Chinese, “百年屈辱” is a period full of painful memories when Chinese underwent sufferings from western invaders. Chinese people are taught that modern times starts from the year 1840. However, for international readers, they cannot achieve emotional resonance and empathy about the history. The translator adopts the strategy of amplification by adding “following the Opium War of 1840”, which marks the time and the historic events. In this case, international readers will grasp the historical background and the cultural information can be understood.

In addition, “扬眉吐气” is a typical Chinese four-character structure. The idiom represents the national pride and emotional release after hundreds of years’ sufferings. Literal translations fail to express the emotion and culture contained in the source text, while the translation “did ourselves proud and felt truly heartened” accurately conveys the emotional core and cultural connotation of the source text. This not only avoid cultural incongruity caused by literal translation but also realizes the cross-cultural transmission of national sentiments.

Example 5:

Source text:

打得一拳开，免得百拳来[7]。

Target text:

Throw one hard punch now to avoid taking a hundred punches in the future.

The cultural image of punch or boxing is shared by both cultures. Therefore, the translator resorts to literal translation and retains the metaphor of one punch and a hundred punch, which reproduces the language style and cultural feature of the source text. Foreign readers can better grasp the meaning of one punch and the consequence. Moreover, the source text is a colloquial expression without subject, and it implies the time logic about the present and future. As for international readers, the literal translation without subject will lead to misunderstandings. Through amplification, the translator adds the time “now” and “in the future” to guarantee the time logic and the relationship between the cause and effect, presenting the culture connotation of “Seeking peace through struggle ensures peace.” This avoids logic misunderstandings brought by different cultural background, enabling international readers to understand the strategic wisdom of the source text.

### **4.3.Adaptive selection and transformation in the communicative dimension**

The fundamental purpose of the language is to communicate with others. Communicative translation attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the

original. Semantic translation attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original[6]. For the translator, the priority is to pay attention to communicative purpose and the text function of the translation. The adaptive selection and transformation in the linguistic and cultural dimension should center on its communicative effect in the target text. For example, the communicative function of the governance is to convey China's political stand, values, the idea of governance to international readers to make sure they know more about China without bias. Below are examples of adaptive selection and transformation in the communicative dimension.

#### Example 6

Source text:

中国人民不惹事也不怕事，在任何困难和风险面前，腿肚子不会抖，腰杆子不会弯，中华民族是吓不倒、压不垮的[7]。

Target text:

We the Chinese people do not provoke others, nor do we shy away from trouble. We do not give in to fear or yield in the face of difficulties and dangers. The Chinese nation will never cower before threats, or be subdued by oppressors.

In the source text, the communicative intention is to clearly convey to the international community the Chinese people's national stance and diplomatic propositions of love for peace, adherence to bottom lines, defiance of power politics, and unyielding resolve. All the translator's adaptive selection and transformation are centered on this core communicative purpose, ultimately realizing the full delivery of the communicative intention and the maximization of communicative effects.

In the target text, three key instances of adaptive selection and transformation are implemented in the communicative dimension. First, “不惹事也不怕事” is a colloquial expression, which represents China's diplomatic standpoint. The translator paraphrases it as “do not provoke others, nor do we shy away from trouble”. This official, direct and unambiguous translation accurately conveys China's standpoint “love for peace and adherence to bottom line” and avoids the semantic fuzziness and weakened standpoint of the colloquial expression. Second, “腿肚子不会抖，腰杆子不会弯” is a vivid and concrete metaphor in Chinese. The literal translation of sentence will be “legs will not tremble; waists will not bend”. Such interpretation will cause misunderstandings among international readers. Therefore, the translator reconstructs the sentence into an official expression, conveying its core as “do not give in to fear or yield”. The translation strengthens its communicative effect. Last but not least, the target text also focuses on the tone and rhythm. The source text uses a series parallelism, with a progressive structure, which is powerful in its rhythm. The translation reproduces it by using the words “nor” and “never” to intensify its tone. Moreover, the subjects of the sentence are “we the Chinese people” and “the Chinese nation”. This strengthens the subjectivity of the sentence and achieve the communicative effect of the source text.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper analyzes the official English translation of excerpts from the Governance of China from the perspective of Hu Gengshen's three-dimensional adaptive selection and transformation theory of Eco-Translatology. The study finds that the official translation forms a complete three-dimensional collaborative adaptive system: the linguistic dimension addresses the typological differences between Chinese and English through adaptive reconstruction of linguistic forms and rhetorical features, laying a solid foundation for cross-language transmission; the cultural dimension eliminates cultural default and misreading through targeted adaptive strategies, accurately conveying China's unique

historical connotations, political ethics and national sentiments; the communicative dimension, as the ultimate foothold, centers on the core communicative intention of the source text, and realizes the full delivery of China's governing philosophy, diplomatic stance and national integrity through multi-level adaptive adjustments. This study not only verifies the strong applicability of Eco-Translatology in political discourse translation, but also summarizes practical adaptive strategies for the international communication of Chinese political discourse, providing reference for the external translation of Chinese discourse in the new era.

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