

# **An Analysis of Chinese-English Translation of Political Terms From the Perspective of Adaptation and Selection Theory**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Chinese political terms are characterized by China's political system and culture. Translation of political terms with Chinese characteristics will help the world to better understand China and China's political system and culture. Due to the historical, political, economic and cultural differences between China and English-speaking countries, the rendering of political terms is crucial to effectively and exactly conveying their meanings to foreign readers. Adaptation and selection translation theory emphasizes the leading and central role of translators. It is translators who adapt to the translation environment and choose appropriate translation strategies to achieve better effect of conveying information. This paper is an attempt to approach the point of rendering political terms from the perspective of adaptation and selection translation theory and to explore better translation strategies with the aim to enhance international communication between China and foreign countries and to promote the building of international discourse system.**

*Keywords: political terms, adaptation, selection, translation strategies*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the CPC Central Committee has attached great importance to strengthening the international communication capability and the construction of foreign discourse system. The construction of China's foreign discourse system is a systematic project, in which the important statements of some Party leaders and the important documents are the main carriers, and the important political terms in these important statements and documents are even more important. In the process of reform and opening up, some important concepts that embody national policies and directions have been put forward one after another, such as "four modernizations", "Chinese dream", "Chinese path", "ecological conservation redline", etc. These important terms are concepts and expressions of great significance and rich in Chinese characteristics. They are characterized by clear connotation, rich characteristics and suitable for dissemination. They are also important achievements of our Party's theoretical innovation and are widely concerned by the international community. These political terms with Chinese characteristics need to be explained by a discourse system that can be easily understood and accepted by overseas readers, and then translation plays a vital role in making foreign audiences understand and accept these terms.

## **II. THE GUIDING ROLE OF TRANSLATION ADAPTATION AND SELECTION THEORY**

In order to do a good job in translation, the translator must satisfy the author's expressive purpose on the one hand and the reader's reading expectation on the other hand. The translator must be faithful to the author as well as the reader. Faithfulness to the two seems to be unified in essence, but there are always various obstacles and difficulties in translation practice, which makes the translator deeply feel that he cannot serve two masters. In the dissemination of China's political discourse to the outside world, we should not only create new concepts, categories and expressions that conform to China's national conditions and distinct Chinese characteristics, but also tell Chinese stories to the international community and disseminate Chinese voices through foreign customary discourse systems and expressions. In translating political terms, the translator must first deeply understand the spirit of the central documents and the party's principles and policies. At the same time, he must grasp the reading habits of foreign language readers and try to use expressions that conform to their reading habits. Therefore, the translation of political terms puts forward higher requirements for translators.

The theory of translation adaptation and selection takes a brand-new theoretical perspective. It is based on

Darwin's biological evolution theory and it explores the interrelation, basic characteristics and laws between the translator's adaptation and selection behavior in the ecological environment of translation, to make a new description and explanation of the nature, process, standards, principles and methods of translation from the perspective of "adaptation" and "selection", and to construct a new theoretical system [1]. This theory unifies translation and cultural context. It not only discusses the translation process, but also gives a new look at the translator's subjective position.

In essence, the translation of political terms is also a practical process in which translators adapt to the translation ecological environment, authors and readers and choose different translation strategies for different political terms. Translators need to give full play to their subjective initiative in translation practice, adapt to the external environment in combination with their own translation and cultural qualities, and constantly choose, consider, compare and screen the translation of political terms, and finally determine the appropriate translation strategies.

### **III. THE ECOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT OF TRANSLATION**

The ecological environment of translation refers to the world embodied by the source language, the original text and the translated text, i.e. the interconnected organic whole of society, author, language, culture, readers and clients. Its constituent elements include the source language, the original language and the target language system, which is a collection of various factors for translators and optimal selection [2]. For China and western countries, due to the great differences in social system, language and culture, religious beliefs, customs and habits, etc., the translator is required to skillfully explain under the conditions of a deep understanding of the ecological environment of translation and familiarity with the cultural backgrounds of both sides, to introduce some new concepts, new phenomena and new problems not found in their countries to target readers, to realize smooth communication between the author and readers, and to accurately transmit the spirit of socialism with Chinese characteristics to overseas readers.

Firstly, the translator should have a profound understanding of the local political and cultural environment. To translate these political terms well, the translator must have certain knowledge background, cultural background and translation skills. On the one hand, he should have strong political awareness and grasp the correct political views in translation. If the translator's political consciousness is not strong, he will often make some political mistakes and even lead to conflicts between countries. On the other hand, the translator should also have a deep understanding of the

local cultural environment. Only after a deep analysis and understanding of political terms with Chinese characteristics can the translator better translate them into the target language.

Secondly, the translator should have a profound understanding of the global environment, history and culture. In one culture there are things that are self-evident and easy to understand, while in another it takes a lot of time to explain them. Translators should enhance their global awareness, have a profound understanding of the history and culture of other countries, and understand the origin and formation process of the target language culture. Translators must first understand their own culture, then understand other cultures they come into contact with, and through independent adaptation, learn from each other's strong points and jointly establish a common understanding. Only in this way can the connotation of the original text be successfully conveyed to the target language readers through translation.

### **IV. THE PERSPECTIVE OF TRANSLATOR'S DOMINANT POSITION**

For a long time, it has been generally believed in the translation circle that the translator is in the middle position in the relationship of "source text-translator-translation". It is also because of the translator's special position that the translator can exert his subjective initiative to adjust his position and function to adapt to the relationship between the author and the reader's discourse rights. Judging from the research results of modern translation theories, most researchers have focused on the comparison between the original and the translated text, with the original-centered theory that overemphasizes the original text and the translation-centered theory that overemphasizes the translation.

In fact, the translator has always played a dominant role in the translation process. In recent years, scholars in China have been talking about the translator's subjectivity and paying more and more attention to the translator. Peng Zhuowu thinks that the translator plays a decisive role in the process of translation, while the past translation studies have neglected the translator as the subject of translation, which is a great mistake [3]. Xu Jun also believes that when defining the subjectivity of translation, the subjective roles of the author and the reader should be taken into account, but it is the translator who is at the center [4].

As a translator of political terms, one must first consider the position of the country and represent the image of the country when translating. Therefore, the translator seems to be bound by many constraints in translating and he needs to be especially careful in translating and take every word into consideration. However, from the perspective of translation practice,

every translation of political terms by the translator is a conscious and active adaptation choice. Translators' conscious adaptation and selection can better guide their translation practice. The higher the degree of translator's awareness, the better the degree of adaptation and selection optimization, the more it can promote the instinctive adaptation and selection of translators, thus obtaining the best translation effect.

## **V. THE ADAPTATION AND CHOICE OF TRANSLATION PERSPECTIVE**

Nida and Taber believe that each language has its own characteristics. Successful translators need to respect language features and make necessary adjustments at any time according to different language features [5]. On the basis of Nida's functional equivalence theory, Yang Mingxing puts forward the concept of "political equivalence" specifically for publicity translation. On the one hand, diplomatic translation must accurately and faithfully reflect the original text and the author's political thoughts and political context; on the other hand, it must be expressed in the target language acceptable to readers, so that the political information obtained by both parties is equivalent, and the translation can play the same role and communicative function as the original text [6].

Political terms in our country are developed according to our national conditions in the process of social development and social practice. They are characterized by strong generality, many juxtaposed structures and popularity. Therefore, according to these characteristics, flexible and diverse methods and strategies should be chosen in translation according to certain principles.

### *A. The principle of literal translation*

If the political terms have no complicated connotation, literal translation can be carried out according to the principle of faithfulness, because literal translation can not only express the meaning of the original text, but also preserve the style of the original text. For example, "与时俱进" can be translated into "keep pace with the times", "科学发展观" into "the scientific outlook on development", and "三个代表" into "three represents".

### *B. Principle of free translation*

Free translation refers to a translation method that emphasizes the meaning of the original text, does not stick to the syntactic structure of the original text and other external forms, and expresses the meaning with the syntactic structure of the target language on the basis of understanding the original text. It focuses on expressing the meaning of the original text in the target language, ignoring formal equivalence.

### *C. Principle of transliteration*

Yang Mingxing believes that when dealing with the translation of disputed place names, the translators should adhere to the principle of political equivalence and adopt transliteration as the main method of translation to declare China's sovereignty over them [7]. For example, in the English translation of the hot word "钓鱼岛" in Sino-Japanese relations, Japan and the United States have always called it "the Senkaku Islands" or "the Pinnacle Islands" according to the Japanese translation. Our country's official transliteration is "The Diaoyu Islands" or "The Diaoyu Dao Islands". Similar situations include "Taiwan and the Penghu Islands".

### *D. Principles of interpretation and translation*

Many abbreviations in Chinese political terms are concise, but these highly refined words usually contain complicated connotations. If we translate literally and directly, it is impossible for foreign readers to understand the real meaning and achieve the purpose of translation. For example, even Chinese readers can hardly understand the term "双随机、一公开"监管" in the literal sense. Therefore, it is necessary to explain the content contained in the original text. From the translation "oversight through inspections by randomly selected inspectors of randomly selected entities and the public release of inspection results", it can be seen that "双随机" refers to randomly selecting law enforcement inspectors and randomly selecting inspection objects, and "一公开" refers to the public release of inspection results.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

Translation of political terms is an important component of the party's and government's foreign propaganda, a supporting element in the construction of the country's foreign discourse system, and of great strategic significance to China's active participation in international ideological and cultural exchanges and the enhancement of international discourse power. The quality of translation of political terms will directly affect China's international image or international relations. A good translation of political terms will not only help reduce the misunderstanding from the international community, realize the unity of differences and seek common ground, enable the international community to have a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of China's governing ideas, reform and development ideas and specific policy content, promote exchanges and cooperation between China and foreign countries, but also provide a unified and standardized text basis for front-line staff in China's diplomacy, news, publicity and other fields, and improve the internal consistency of the foreign discourse system. Therefore, we should not only

comprehensively improve the translation level and quality of the existing translators, pay attention to the choice of translation strategies, but also strengthen the construction of translation teams, absorb the participation of outstanding translation talents from all walks of life, and provide better translation perspectives and suggestions, so as to improve the application level of political terms with Chinese characteristics and make the world better hear the voice of China.

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