

*Original Paper*

Research on Sports-related English Translation from the  
Perspective of Communicative Translation Theory - Taking  
Texts of the Beijing Winter Olympics as an Example

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**Abstract**

*The resounding success of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics has garnered significant attention towards Chinese sports undertakings, and related sports news and interviews have become an important platform for the general public to learn about sports culture, event information and the essence of sportsmanship. Therefore, how to translate sports texts in an accurate manner has been essential to break the linguistic bridge between different culture, as well as to publicize Chinese cultural soft power. Based on this, this paper will analyze and summarize the linguistic characteristics of sports texts, and propose suitable translation techniques and methods. It will take the analysis of interviews conducted during the Beijing Winter Olympics as an example under the guidance of the communicative translation theory, with a view to effectively improving the quality of sports-related translation.*

**Keywords**

*sports-related translation, communicative translation theory, translation method, Beijing Winter Olympics*

**1. Introduction**

As a unique form of translation, sports-related translation plays an important role worldwide. With the rapid development of the global sports industry and the increase of international sports events, sports-related translation has become a bridge connecting spectators and athletes from different countries. The hosting of large-scale international events such as the Olympic Games and the Winter Olympic Games has further ignited the passion for sports among Chinese. People mainly understand and follow the latest sports news and developments at home and abroad through various news media, on-site commentary, academic journals, sports rules, and product manuals related to sports technology.

Therefore, sports-related translation can help Chinese people understand the development of world sports, promote traditional sports culture, and enhance international sports exchanges.

There is a mature system of translation study in China, there are plenty theoretical experts and scholars, as well as representative and instructive achievements in the field of sports English translation research as well. OuYang, N. (2015) conducted research on the translation of sports news idioms from a cross-cultural perspective and proposed corresponding translation standards and methods. Yuan, B. (2019) categorized sports texts and functions, and applied translation theory to translation strategies and methods at the levels of word and sentence selection, discourse structure, and logical rhetoric.

Still there are still some gaps in research questions and methods in the field of sports-related translation, especially in interdisciplinary research. Firstly, from the perspective of systematicness, the current research topics in sports-related translation are still relatively scattered and lack systematic elaboration. Secondly, from the perspective of breadth, the study of sports-related translation is not comprehensive, still focusing more on specific words and sentences processing while lacking exploration of the theoretical evidence.

The goal of sports-related translation is not only to accurately convey the results and information of the events, but also to transmit the tense atmosphere and emotions. That is to say, it focuses more on its communicative effectiveness. This concept aligns well with the theory of communicative translation (Chen & Liu, 2023). Therefore, this article focuses on how to utilize the classic theory of translation - communicative translation theory, to provide a new perspective for analyzing textual examples from the Beijing Winter Olympic Games, aiming to explore methods suitable for sports-related translation.

## **2. Communicative Translation Theory**

"Communicative translation" is a concept first put forward by Peter Newmark, a famous British translator and translation theorist, in his book "Exploring Translation Issues" published in 1981. Its purpose is to "endeavor to make the effect of the translated text on the target language readers the same as that of the original text on the source language readers"(Newmark, Peter., 1981/1988:22). That is to say, communicative translation lays an emphasis on conveying information in accordance with the linguistic, cultural and pragmatic modes of the target language, rather than reproducing the original text as faithfully as possible (Chen & Bao, 2023).

Translators thus have more freedom to interpret the original text, adjust text style, remove ambiguities, and even correct the original author's mistakes. Since translators have to achieve a certain communicative purpose, there is a specific target readership and therefore the translation is bound to break the limitations of the original text (Luo, 2012). Besides, communicative translation is reader-centered, focusing on the information and reaction acquired by the reader, i.e. the effect of information transfer, in order to make the translation authentic and fluent.

According to Newmark's interpretation of communicative translation, communicative translation has the following characteristics: first, it focuses on the target readers and is close to the linguistic

conventions of the target language in terms of linguistic expressions; second, the translation aims at reproducing the central content of the original text rather than its form; third, it pays attention to the social utility created by the original text and the ideological and emotional feelings it conveys; and fourth, it is integrated into the translator's subjective expressions to a certain extent.

In China, communicative translation theory has gained widespread attention, and research has been conducted since its introduction in the 1980s. Domestic scholars have conducted in-depth discussions and applications of this theory, with Wang Hongzhi, Liu Hongwei, and others making valuable contributions to translation teaching and research. In terms of the practical application of communicative translation theory, scholars have analyzed and discussed specific cases. For example, in the translation of literary works, news reports, advertisements, and other fields, scholars have frequently used official translations to guide practice through communicative translation theory. However, in the field of sports, which also has a communicative effect, current research involvement is limited. Based on this limitation, this article aims to broaden the theoretical research field and revive its vitality.

### **3. Sports-related English Features**

Sports-related English language is different from general English, because of its specific usage occasions. It highlights the characteristics of its precision, objectivity, professionalism, and vividness. In the process of translation, due to the differences in language, culture, habits and ways of thinking, there are many differences in English-Chinese news texts, and this paper will analyze their characteristics from the perspectives of vocabulary, syntax and discourse.

#### *3.1 Lexical Level*

##### **3.1.1 Use of Abbreviations**

Winter Olympics and other large international events in the official text, often used to a large number of abbreviations, such as OG (Olympic Games), OWG (Olympic Winter Games), IOC (International Olympic Committee).

There are two explanations for the emergence of acronyms: one is to make it easier to use commonly used words. In daily life, it is a routine phenomenon to replace commonly used words with abbreviations on the premise that people in a particular field have already agreed on them. For example, OG, which is often mentioned in sports events, will bring great inconvenience to commentators and writers if the full name Olympic Games is used all the time; the second lies in the expression of some specific content, which has a certain reminder significance. This is mainly manifested in the labeling of some large sports organizations, the use of fixed abbreviations can better clarify the responsibilities and the importance of the organization (Newmark, 2001).

##### **3.1.2 Use of Terminology**

Sports terminology is a kind of language symbols, which can exactly explain the names of sports, theories, technical actions, competition rules, refereeing or other related contents, with textual

characteristics such as simplicity, special meaning of common word list, specialization and systematization.

This discussion focuses on terminology related to winter sports, taking the word "项目" as an example. When we talk about "项目" in the Winter Olympic Games program, it is easy to recognize it as program. However, in fact, in the professional documents, different English words are used to express different scopes and meanings of "项目", including sport, discipline, and program.

During the Beijing Winter Olympics, a total of seven "sports" were held. It's recognized that one international federation corresponds to one sport, which can be translated as "sport". Each "sport" can be further subdivided into various "disciplines", which are the most commonly understood "项目" in our daily life, representing different kinds of sports competitions, and the Beijing Winter Olympics contains 15 disciplines. While a discipline contains one or more small events, each one produces the corresponding champion, runner-up and third-place finisher, which is translated as "event". Take ice skating as an example, ice skating belongs to "sport", figure skating, short track speed skating and speed skating belong to "disciplines", while men's 500m race, men's 1500m race and team relay competition belong to "events".

It can be concluded that, although all items contain the meaning of "项目", but in different contexts of use, the translation of the terminology used is not consistent, and this is extremely important to support the expertise of the translation.

Other terminology includes translations involved in various sports, event names, competitions, technical movements, tournament rules, and so on. The following are some examples:

- Sports: Alpine Skiing, Cross-country Skiing, Short Track Speed Skating, Figure Skating.
- Event Name: ISU Short Track Speed Skating World Cup, World Short Track Speed Skating Championships.
- Rule terms: ADV (awarded to the next round), PEN (penalty), DNF (did not finish), DNS (did not start)
- Technical movement names: Triple Axel, single quad toe loop, Lane Change.

### 3.1.3 Use of Diverse Expressions of Synonyms

The English language avoids the use of a large number of identical words and emphasizes the diversity of expressions, which is more obvious in the application of Sports-related English. For example, the same meaning of "winning the gold medal" and "finishing first" can be expressed in many different ways in reports of sports events, such as "secured his gold", "realized their golden dream", "claim a gold in", and "clinch his first gold medal". This also reflects the characteristics of English as a formative language.

## 3.2 Syntactic Level

Sports-related English adopts a rich variety of sentence structures, usually consisting of a variety of modifiers. Sometimes a sentence can even be a paragraph for its length. However, at the same time, sports news reporting strives for simplicity, and English sports news is usually presented in the form of

organization of simple sentences. In the news released during the Winter Olympics, both complex long sentences and concise short sentences are common, with loose sentence structures. In addition, a large number of direct or indirect quotations are used in the interview materials of the Winter Olympics on athletes, which are heavily colloquialized. The logical relationship among sentences is not very clear, requiring the translator to adopt different methods to cope with them in practical application.

### *3.3 Chapter Level*

Sports-related English is usually characterized by humor and colloquialism. Sports events are loved by people for their intense pace and excitement, so exaggerated and humorous phrases are often seen in related materials. Authors may use vivid language, imaginative metaphors, and exaggerated techniques to express their emotions and opinions about the competition, aiming to infect the readers. At the same time, sports event reports have a wide audience, and in order to enhance the readability of the content, their terms are usually more colloquial. Therefore, in the process of translation, translators should try to retain the stylistic style of the original discourse, convey and reproduce the exaggerated emotion of the original in the translated text.

## **4. Translation Methods to Sports-related English Based on Communicative Translation Theory**

As a professional genre of English, sports English is characterized by its unique linguistic features and writing styles. According to Newmark, communicative translation can be free from the form of the original text, focusing on the receiver's understanding and reaction, and as close as possible to the effect of the original text on the readers of the original text. Communicative translation requires the translator to reorganize the language structure in order to make the translation smooth and authentic. Reflected in sports-related translation, the first step is to clarify the function of the original text so as to ensure the equivalence between the target text and the original text. At the same time, it is necessary to give full consideration to the differences between English and Chinese sports texts in terms of words, sentences, and rhetorical devices, and adopt translation techniques such as subject switching, lexical switching, splitting whole sentences, integrating clauses, and paraphrasing according to specific situation. By doing so the translator can ensure that the target text is fluent and conforms to the rules of the target language (Newmark, 1988).

### *4.1 Subject Conversion*

It refers to the adjustment of the subject-predicate relationship in the target language to ensure a more natural and logical flow of the translation. This technique is particularly useful when the subject in the source language does not align well with the grammatical or semantic structure of the target language. By switching the subject, the translator can make the translation more coherent and readable, while preserving the original meaning and information. This adjustment often involves rephrasing or restructuring parts of the sentence to better suit the target language's expressive habits and reading patterns.

Example 1: Snow sports was a comparatively weak point for China in the past, contributing only one of

the 13 golds prior to the Beijing Games, which came from Han Xiaopeng's success in the men's aerials freestyle skiing at Turin 2006. Xiaopeng's success in the men's aerials freestyle skiing at Turin 2006.

Translation: 中国过去在雪上运动上相对薄弱,在北京奥运会前只拿到了13枚金牌中的一枚,而这枚金牌来自韩小鹏在2006年都灵冬奥会上的男子空中自由式滑雪冠军。

Analysis: Here, the main clause of the original text uses "snow sports" as the subject, mentioning that a gold medal was won in this sport, but in the subordinate clause, the conjunction "which" is used to refer to the gold medal mentioned above as the subject of the subordinate clause. The conjunction actually may not cause any problems in English expression due to the connection of the relational pronouns. However, when translated into Chinese, if the original sentence order and subject form are still reserved, it will confuse readers and make it inconvenient to straighten out the logical relationship. According to the theory of communicative translation, the focus of this sentence is to emphasize China's efforts and progress in snow sports, so here we adopt the method of subject conversion, replacing the subject with "China", which expresses the owner of the gold medal and also emphasizes the importance of China as the main subject of the speech. In the subordinate clause, the subject "the gold medal" is added, which clearly expresses the message of the original sentence.

Example 2: Following a silver in slopestyle, which made him the first Chinese male snowboarder to reach the Olympic podium, Su bagged a big air gold with two 1800 showpieces, the best birthday gift for the snowboarding boy.

Translation: 苏翊鸣在坡面障碍技巧比赛中摘得银牌,成为首位登上奥运领奖台的中国男子单板滑雪运动员。他以两轮转体1800的高难度动作的优越表现夺得了一枚大跳台金牌,这是送给这位单板滑雪男孩最好的生日礼物。

Analysis: The original sentence exhibits a loosely structured syntax, containing numerous clauses and frequently utilizing participial phrases. This linguistic approach results in implicit logical relationships between the clauses, often rendering the subject of the sentence distant from its beginning, thereby making it less prominent. However, in the translation, the translator has deliberately altered the sentence structure to make the logical relationships more explicit and align better with the comprehension habits of Chinese readers. Specifically, the translator has moved the subject to the beginning of the sentence, emphasizing the core message of praising the outstanding achievements of the young athlete Su Yiming. This adjustment not only enhances the coherence and readability of the translated sentence but also effectively conveys the communicative intention of the original text.

#### *4.2 Lexical Conversion*

English is a static language, which mostly uses nouns to express abstract thinking, while Chinese is a dynamic language, which mostly uses verbs to convey concrete thinking (OuYang, 2015). Lexical transformation refers to the fact that due to the fundamental difference between English and Chinese languages, it is not possible to achieve word-to-word correspondence in translation, and the content of the original text can be conveyed completely and unmistakably by transforming the lexical properties of certain words. The conversion of word classes plays a crucial role in communicative translation,

facilitating the adaptation to target language habits, maintaining communicative effectiveness, emphasizing key information, handling cultural differences, and enhancing the quality of the translation. Therefore, translators should flexibly employ this technique when undertaking communicative translation to improve the accuracy and readability of their translations.

#### 4.2.1 The Conversion of Nouns into Verbs

It is a translation technique that involves the transformation of nouns in the source language into verbs in the target language. This technique is often employed to enhance the dynamism and expressiveness of the translation, as verbs tend to carry more action and meaning than nouns. By converting nouns into verbs, translators can bring out the implicit actions or processes implied by the nouns in the source text, making the translation more vivid and engaging.

Example 3: "It has been two straight weeks of the most intense highs and lows I've ever experienced in my life. It has changed my life forever," said Gu.

Translation: “连续两周，我经历了人生中最刺激的高潮和低谷。这永远地改变了我的生活。”谷爱凌说道。

Analysis: In this sentence, the noun phrase "highs and lows" is used to metaphorically express the ups and downs of the race, and here the author verbalizes it as "experiencing highs and lows", which, according to the analysis of the theory of communicative translation, is more in line with the Chinese language and the habit of oral expression. Besides, it realized the effect that translation not restricted to the original form, being more capable of conveying the feelings that the athletes want to express about the difficulty of winning the race.

#### 4.2.2 The Conversion of Prepositions into Verbs

It is a translation technique that involves transforming prepositions in the source language into verbs in the target language. This technique is used to convey the action or process implied by the preposition more clearly and dynamically in the translation. By converting prepositions into verbs, translators can avoid the verbosity and redundancy that may arise from literal translations, and instead convey the intended meaning in a more concise and natural manner. This approach helps to improve the readability and fluency of the translation, while maintaining the original intent and meaning of the source text.

Example 4: She added a silver medal in slopestyle, before wrapping up her Olympic debut with a gold in her most proficient halfpipe event.

Translation: 她在坡面障碍技巧比赛中获得了一枚银牌，然后在她最熟练的 U 型场地技巧比赛中获得了金牌，结束了她的奥运首秀。

Analysis: The sentence "before" is a preposition, which is meant to express the time meaning of "before", but in this case, the context of the sentence is "the previous excellent results made the athlete's Olympic debut a success", so we choose to translate it as a verb meaning "to end", which enhances the action of the original sentence and achieves the effect of praising the athlete. Similarly, the preposition "with", which is converted into the verb "to get" in the translation process, makes the translation vivid and fluent and enhances the sense of movement, otherwise, translating it as a

preposition in accordance with the lexical equivalence of the original text would make the expression of the translated text hard and obscure.

#### *4.3 Splitting Whole Sentence*

Splitting a whole sentence means that a complex long sentence can be split into several short sentences for translation as long as the original text contains many clauses. In the sports news of the Winter Olympics, besides short sentences, long sentences with complex structures are also common. When the sentences are too long and not easy to understand, if the translator just follows the original text's order and structure rigidly, the translation may look more bloated (Tuo, 2022). This can be seen in the following example.

**Example 5:** 刚在亚冬会担任开幕式中国代表团旗手、并在 500 米短道速滑获得金牌的武大靖对记者感慨道, "在北京申冬奥成功之后, 我完全感受到了冰雪运动的发展已经进入了一个特别好的阶段, 这也是我们作为冰雪人最期待的时候。"武大靖在冬奥会市场开发启动仪式之后说。

**Translation:** Wu Dajing just served as the flag bearer of the Chinese delegation for the opening ceremony of the Asian Winter Games and won the gold medal in the 500- meter short track speed skating. After the success of Beijing's bid for the Winter Olympics, I fully feel that the development of snow sports has entered a particularly good stage, which is what we, as snow athletes, are all about. After the success of Beijing's bid for the Winter Olympics, I fully feel that the development of snow sports has entered a particularly good stage, which is what we, as snow athletes, are most looking forward to the Winter Olympic market development.

**Analysis:** According to Newmark's theory of communicative translation, the translator can translate according to the internal body effect of the original text and the reading habits of the target language readers, adjusting the structure of the original text and trying to improve the overall effect of the translation. This sentence is an interview with Wudajing by a reporter at the launching ceremony. The subject of the whole sentence is Wu Dajing, and a long list of attributive words is used to modify him at the beginning. If the original is not adjusted properly, the translation will weaken the focus of the sentence. Therefore, here it is divided into two short sentences, which are translated after adjusting the sentence order while keeping the information of the original text intact. This is more convenient for readers to receive the text information quickly and achieve good communication effect.

#### *4.4 Integration of Clauses*

And integrating clauses refers to combining two or more clauses in the original text into one whole sentence (Yuan, 2019). As long as the translation is not lengthy and the meanings of two or more sentences are closely related, it can be integrated and translated into one sentence. In sports news, simple sentences and simple structures are often used to reflect their brevity.

**Example 6:** 谷爱凌第一轮拿到 93.75 分, 第二轮后暂列第三位。第三跳中谷爱凌得到 94.50 分, 成功帮助她反超比分, 最终以 188.25 分获得该项目的金牌, 这也是冬奥会历史上首枚自由式滑雪大跳台金牌。

**Translation:** With a combined score of 188.25 points - 93.75 from her first run and 94.50 from the third,



Gu came back from third place after the second run to take gold as The event made its Olympic debut. Analysis: In the process of communicative translation, the focus of translation is to accurately disseminate information from the original text. Therefore, the fragmented information in the original text should be integrated as much as possible in the translation. In this sentence, the translator integrates several short sentences into one long sentence to make the original message more complete. For example, the first sentence and the third sentence both mention Gu Ailing's performance in the race, which can be considered to be merged by using the parallel structure. While the second sentence expresses the ranking in the race, which is related to the meaning of "overtaking" in the fourth sentence. It can be considered to be merged by using the gerund structure. The last clause reflects the excellent performance of Gu Ailing, which can be dealt with by preposition or determiner clause. In this way it can accurately present the meaning of the original text, state the race and score in an organized way, and make the translation conform to the Chinese language habit of writing.

#### 4.5 Free Translation

Free translation plays a crucial role in communicative translation as well, enabling translators to accurately convey the intentions and information of the source text while ensuring a natural and fluent expression in the target language. Therefore, when undertaking communicative translation, translators should flexibly employ free translation based on specific circumstances to enhance the quality and effectiveness of their translations.

Example 7: In Beijing (CHN) Van der Poel barely managed to keep Roest at bay in an exciting 5,000m battle, before astonishing the world winning the 10,000m in a world record time at the National Speed Skating Oval. world record time at the National Speed Skating Oval.

Translation: 在北京（中国），范德普尔在一场激动人心的 5000 米比赛中险胜罗斯特，随后在国家速度滑冰馆以打破世界纪录的成绩赢得了 10000 米冠军。

Analysis: The phrase "keep ... at bay" means "to keep ... can't get close to, isolate ...". If directly translated in this sentence, it will be difficult for Chinese readers to understand. According to communicative translation theory, the translator should pay more attention to the readers when translating. In our concept, to keep the other player away from the podium means to defeat the other player in a race, so here we adopt the method of free translation, which is "win", which can make the translation more in line with the usage scenario and the habit of the target language readers.

Example 8: Roest was looking for revenge at the World All round Championships in Hamar (NOR) on 5-6 March, but again bit the dust.

Translation: 罗斯特期盼能在 3 月 5 日至 6 日哈马尔（挪威）举行的世界全能锦标赛上一雪前耻，但再次失利告终。

Analysis: The phrase "bite the dust" originated in the United States, literally means "to bite the dirt on the ground, to gnaw the dirt, to eat the dirt", but its actual meaning is "to be killed in battle", which is translated as "to die in battle, to fall dead on the battlefield, to dedicate oneself". Used in the context of the competition, it can be translated as "to fall, to lose"; and similarly, "look for revenge" is meant to be

vengeance, and here the meaning is "strive for success this time because of the previous failure", which can be translated as "一雪前耻" according to the Chinese expression habit. The translation not only matches the effect of the target language's information transmission in the communicative translation, but also to a certain extent matches the expression style of the original text.

## 5. Summary

By introducing the theory of communicative translation into the field of Sports-related English, this paper briefly analyzes and elaborates the characteristics of Sports-related English as a form of English expression with a high degree of professional requirements and a special genre, and briefly analyzes some of the methods of translation through the examples of the Beijing Winter Olympics, such as converting subjects, lexical conversion, splitting whole sentences, integrating clauses, and intentional translation, and so on.

The difficulty of Sports-related English translation lies in the fact that it not only has to satisfy the basic principles of translation, such as accuracy, fluency and smoothness, but also has to have a comprehensive understanding of sports-specific terminology and background knowledge. In addition, as there are many kinds of sports texts, including news reports, oral interviews, rule descriptions and so on, each with its own characteristics, it is difficult to analyze and study them comprehensively and thoroughly, and it is necessary to build a more comprehensive and targeted knowledge system, and as for the specific methods of translation, it is even more benevolent and wise, and it is necessary to be further improved and supplemented.

Unfortunately, however, China has not yet formed a more complete translation theory and research system in this field, which can precisely become a major direction for future research.

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